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Alias The Deacon

*A COMEDY IN A PROLOGUE AND
THREE ACTS*

BY

JOHN B. HYMER

AND

LE ROY CLEMENS

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CHARACTERS
(As we meet them)

"BRICK" McGOORTY
THE DEACON
TONY
JOHN ADAMS
A BRAKEMAN
PHYLLIS HALLIDAY
MRS. CLARK
WILLIE CLARK
JIM CUNNINGHAM
MRS. GREGORY
LUELLA GREGORY
"BULL" MORAN
"SLIM" SULLIVAN
ED KING
MRS. PIKE
DEPUTY


SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

PROLOGUE: *Interior of a refrigerator car on a freight train, Eastward bound, en route between Denver and Kansas City. Midnight.*

ACT I: *Office of the Commercial House in Herrington, Kansas. Evening, a week later.*
(NOTE: The curtain is lowered momentarily in this act to denote a lapse of three hours.)

ACT II: *The combination parlor and library at the Commercial House. The following evening.*

ACT III: *Same as Act I. A few minutes later.*



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PROLOGUE

AT RISE: *Effect on one long and one short train whistle.*

SCENE: *The stage is black out. The house lights are gradually dimmed down and out. When black out, the curtain rises. An effect of a moving freight train and engine whistle blowing two long and two short blasts. A light effect from the front of the house shows passing telegraph poles, trees, clouds, smoke, etc., thrown on the exterior of the freight car; this effect dims out, the front of the car opens, the car lights dim up and effects cease except smoke and cloud effect which shows above the car. The scene represents the interior of an empty refrigerator box car on a moving freight train en route between Denver and Kansas City. The car is divided into an upper and lower section by the usual flooring. At the upper R. end of this partition there is an open trap about two feet square. Back C. is the usual sliding box car door. The reflection created by a trainman's lantern, which hangs on the back wall of the car, reveals the dimly silhouetted figures of four men (who are obviously uninvited passengers on the freight), seated on the floor near the C. of the car, engaged in a game of poker. Collectively, they represent what might be termed a "rough-and-ready" crowd.*

"BRICK" McGOORTY is a large, powerfully-built brute of a man with a huge shock of unkempt red hair and a bullying personality.

"TONY" is a swarthy, husky Italian. Having recently escaped from State's prison, his bearing is furtive and alert.

JOHN ADAMS is a well-set-up, good-looking chap about twenty-five. There is about his manner and bearing an attitude of "devil-may-care."

THE DEACON, the fourth member of the quartette, is a dignified-appearing "Knight of the Road," about fifty. His personality reflects poise, charm, and at the same time a quiet cunning and power which enables him at all times to cope with any situation.

While "BRICK" assumes an attitude of leadership over the others, it is apparent that his self-appointed office carries little weight with them—all of whom are obviously able to "take care of themselves."

As the curtain rises there is general *ad. lib.*, while the DEACON skillfully shuffles the cards and prepares to deal.

Positions:

TONY	JOHN
BRICK	DEACON

(Seated on floor.)

BRICK. Naw, ya don't—lemme cut 'em!

DEACON. Certainly. Pardon my ethical error. But Mr. Hoyle expressly stipulates that the player to the right of the dealer shall cut the cards.

BRICK. All right, let him cut 'em. (JOHN cuts the cards.) But I ain't fergettin' ye copped the pot on yer las' deal—an' nobody cut 'em.

TONY. (As the DEACON starts to deal) Yas-a, an' geev-a me full-a house. I stand pats. You tak' one-a card, make-a flush-a straight. Dam' funny.

DEACON. (*Politely*) Play, gentlemen.

BRICK. I'm openin' for a jit.

TONY. I stay-a weeth you. (*Throws down his money.*)

JOHN. (*Throws in cards*) I'm a passenger.

DEACON. Well, well, gentlemen. (*He studies his hand thoughtfully.*)

BRICK. (*Nervously, snarls*) What 'n 'ell ya tryin' t' do, looks spots on 'em?

DEACON. Dear me—dear me— (*He again studies his hand.*) I'm afraid I shall have to raise you, gentlemen—one Buffalo. (*He adds a nickel to the pot.*)

BRICK. Oh, hell! Ketch me openin' on a pair of Jacks ag'in. (*He throws down his cards. Rises. To TONY*) Go after him—he's bluffin'!

TONY. You think-a he bluff? Why you not stick?

BRICK. (*Leans over and looks at TONY's hand*) Go on. Ya got 'im licked before the draw.

TONY. I stay with you.

BRICK. Stay, Hell! Raise him, yo' poor stook—he'll lay down. (*Goes R. to jug of water—drinks.*)

TONY. You not steal-a theese-a pot on a bluff. I raise-a you one-a five cents. (*Throws down money.*)

DEACON. (*Quietly*) Come on again. (*Money in pot.*)

TONY. You not getta my goats. Come on once-a more yourself. (*Money in pot.*)

BRICK. (*Comes over to TONY*) That'll make 'im drop 'em.

DEACON. Two nickels, and one thin dime, my friend. (*He adds the coins to the pot.*)

TONY. (*Sourly—to BRICK*) He's-a no drops!

BRICK. Go on—it's your pot if ye stick to the finish.

TONY. I steek to the finish! (*He contributes to the pot. BRICK drinks. Returns jug to floor.*)

DEACON. (*Taking up the deck*) How many cards?

TONY. Two—(*Pause*)—Aces. (*Eagerly, as the DEACON deals two, puts deck down, puts cards in hand*) How many you'll gonna take, eh?

DEACON. I'm going to play these.

TONY. You stand-a pat? (DEACON *nods*. TONY *turns to BRICK*) The *finish* she's-a come!

DEACON. It's your bet, my friend.

TONY. I bet—I bet-a I'm a pretty wise-a Guinea. What-a you got, eh?

DEACON. It'll cost you just two bits to find out. (*He adds a quarter to the pot, looks at cards.*)

BRICK. Call 'im!

TONY. Like hell I call! All-a time he's-a gots a four ace, a full-a house, everythin' for beat-a me. Next-a time he deal—I cut-a da cards. (*He throws down his cards. THE DEACON rakes in the pot as he sings a snatch of "Bringing in the Sheaves."*)

BRICK. What did you have, Parson?

DEACON. Parson. You flatter me—just plain Deacon.

BRICK. Deacon, ha, ha—Deacon. (THE DEACON *places his cards face up on the floor. TONY looks at cards, curses in Italian.*)

TONY. Uh—Maladeeta la carta!

BRICK. A pair of sevens!—I told you he was bluffin'. My two louscy jacks woulda beat him.

DEACON. Easily. (TONY *indulges in a fresh outburst of cursing in his native tongue.*) You seem to be a trifle excited, my friend. Tell us what it's all about—in English.

TONY. I tell-a you queeck—you dam-a cheat! (ADAMS *rises and BRICK comes a step centre.*)

DEACON. Ah, ah. We should never let our angry passion rise, *Antonio Catena!*

TONY. How you know-a my name?

DEACON. And I know more than your name, my friend.

TONY. I kill a you! (*With uncontrollable pas-*

sion, springs at DEACON, who, still seated, kicks him back; then TONY draws a long-bladed knife and springs for the DEACON.)

JOHN. (*Grabs TONY*) None o' that knife stuff, ya damn Guinea.

TONY. (*Struggling*) I kill-a heem queeck!

JOHN. Gimme that knife. (*He tries unsuccessfully to force TONY's grasp.*) Drop it or I'll break your arm. (*He twists TONY's arm until TONY on knees releases the knife, which BRICK promptly secures.*)

TONY. Let-a me up—I choke-a heem.

DEACON. (*Quietly*) Let him up—(*JOHN releases TONY, who gets to his feet and is about to spring at the DEACON*)—and I'll buy him a ticket back to the Colorado State Prison.

TONY. (*Takes step back, fearfully*) What'a you talk about, eh?

DEACON. So you're going to choke me, eh? Come ahead and you'll find that you're not up against a fourteen-year-old girl this time.

TONY. You make-a crazy talks—

BRICK. (*Curiously—showing TONY* } (*Spoken*
aside) What th' hell's he done? } *together.*)

DEACON. (*Still sits*) Assaulted a Colorado school girl, and a committee of twelve charitable citizens gave him twenty years in State's prison—

TONY. You never live to squeal on me. I'll kill him! I'll kill him! (*Starts for DEACON. BRICK throws him down R.*)

BRICK. (*To TONY*) So that's your line, eh? I'm pretty strong fer th' skirts myself, but so far I ain't never had ter choke one. How did ya get out-a stir? (*TONY grunts and turns upstage.*)

DEACON. Broke away from a convict work gang. One of the guards tried to stop him and our friend Tonio here split his head open with a shovel and made his get-away.

BRICK. (*Leeringly, to the cowering TONY*) So now youse a candidate fer the *electrical shimmy*. How'd ya get th' dope on him, Deak?

DEACON. While perusing "The Denver Times" over my morning coffee yesterday I enjoyed a detailed account of the escapade, embellished with a Rembrandt of Antonio, posed by the State photographer.

(*JOHN is up c. TONY down R. BRICK right centre.*)

BRICK. Whaddaya know? We're travellin' in swell company—murderers and everything. Ya'll have ter do some tall figgerin', Tony. Where ye hittin' fer?

TONY. That's-a my business. (*Snarls at him.*) They never catch-a me. I not afraid for any man here—you all-a crook, same like-a me.

BRICK. Them's hard words, Bo, ter pull on a guy what ain't done nuthin' worser than a little game o' black-jack—an' the "Deak" here, what gets his wid car jugglin', eh, "Deak"? That's what-cha said to call you, didn't ya?

(*READY Whistle.*)

DEACON. (*Laughs; prepares to deal*) If you'll pardon me, gentlemen, I'll indulge in a little solitaire. (*Starts to lay out cards.*)

(*WHISTLE Effect.*)

BRICK. (*After pause*) Don't cheat yourself. (*THE DEACON continues with his game. TONY withdraws to the other end of the car, sits and lights his pipe and sulks, muttering in Italian. BRICK peruses a newspaper—suddenly exclaims*) Whadda ya know! Another cut in the income tax. (*Pauses and then turns to JOHN*) Say, bo, what's your line?

(*READY Lights.*)

JOHN. That's my business.

DEACON. (*Continuing game*) I suppose, Brother, that you're not taking this outing for your health.

BRICK. Come on, Bo, let's be sociable. Spill it—we're all brudders.

JOHN. We're all in the same box car—let it go at that.

BRICK. Where ya hittin' fer?

JOHN. Anywhere—so long as they don't ask me for a ticket.

BRICK. Jes' a "bo," eh? (*JOHN nods.*) Yuh got the right idea, buddy . . . dis old world owes us a livin' and dis is de easy life. Free as da boids—north in da summer, south in da winter and when ya croak ye take just as much wid ya as Rockefeller. (*Pause.*) Are ya broke?

JOHN. You said it.

BRICK. (*Looks around first—to TONY—then cautiously*) How d'ye like to kick in wit' me on a little job in Topeka?

JOHN. What kind of a job? (*TONY lends an ear.*
BRICK *glances at him, and TONY looks away.*)

(*WHISTLE Effect.*)

BRICK. (*To JOHN*) I'll wise ya before we pull in. (*Pause five seconds—then a prolonged whistle is heard. TONY springs quickly to his feet, emitting a startled exclamation. Backs up to wall. BRICK rises, crosses R.*) What th' hell's th' matter with ya? (*Goes to R.*)

TONY. The train, she's-a gonna stops! (*THE DEACON rises, starts to slide the car door open.*)

DEACON. Any of you gentlemen getting out at Herrington? (*Opens door.*)

BRICK. To hell with Herrington. Shut that door. If a brakie sees this light, we'll all get out. (*Blows out lantern. This leaves the car in darkness.*)

(*LIGHTS Off.*)

DEACON. We're pulling into the yards now. We'd better retire to the refrigerator. (*Closes door.*)

Points to go. They exit into refrigerator section of car. Exit TONY, BRICK, JOHN and DEACON. DEACON closes the rear car door before he exits.) Low bridge, gentlemen, as you enter the refrigerator.

(At this point the engine bell is heard to ring and the sound of the brakes being applied; also the escape of steam from the engine valve. The light effects showing the Herrington freight yards at night, which has been showing on the drop back of the car door, is now brought to a standstill . . . the whole effect denoting that the train has come to a stop in the Herrington freight yards.)

(Effect off and cut out drop on.)

TONY. *(Loud in the dark, after short pause)* Damn-a for hell! I lay down three-a seex!

BRICK. I tol' ya he was bluffin'!

DEACON. *(Quietly, sarcastic)* Gentlemen, I must insist on a period of silent prayer.

TONY. *(After short pause)* I should-a raise-a you beeg!

(Ready effect, ready lights, ready whistle, ready bell.)

BRICK. *(In a whisper)* I tol' ya—

DEACON. Sh-sh-sh—

(There is a period of silence, then the car door is opened with a loud bang and a BRAKEMAN appears, flashing his lantern around the car. THE BRAKEMAN calls off to R.)

BRAKEMAN. *(Calls off to R.)* She's all clean, Bill. No bums in here! *(Closes door.)*

BRICK. Whattaya mean bums? (*After a pause, cautiously*) Has he gone?

DEACON. Yes, but we'd better stick here until she pulls out. (*Pause, five seconds.*)

TONY. Somebody's gotta foots in-a my face. (*Short pause.*)

BRICK. Who said this was a refrigerator—hot-ter'n the devil in here.

DEACON. Sh!

(There is a period of silence. Then the car door is slowly opened, revealing in the moonlight a slim figure, apparently that of a BOY, who tosses a parcel into the car, looks cautiously behind him, then makes a quick spring which lands him safely into the floor of the car. He gets quickly to his feet, closes car door all but about one foot, then goes to the rear of the car and crouches fearfully on the floor. The engine whistle sounds two short blasts, the bell rings and the train is obviously again on its way. THE BOY emits a sigh of relief and sinks wearily onto the floor. He has left the door partly open.)

BRICK. (*In the dark*) Come on down, Bos—she's pullin' out.

(Effect on whistle and bell.)

(The four vagrants descend to the lower section of the car. BRICK goes to the door and closes it.)

DEACON. Better light up, and we'll dine. It's precisely forty miles before our next stop.

(He crosses down L. BRICK strikes a match and lights the lantern. The car lights up. THE DEA-

CON *is the first to discover the presence of the newcomer.*)

(*LIGHTS On.*)

DEACON. Hello? (*Draws back.*)

BRICK. What the—!

(*TONY exclaims in Italian.*)

DEACON. We have a juvenile passenger— (*He walks over to the BOY, L. of BOY.*) Where to, Sonny?

BOY. (*In muffled, high-pitched tones*) I don't know.

BRICK. Gee, he talks like a nance.

DEACON. He's frightened. Running away from home, Sonny?

BOY. Y-y-yeh—

TONY. You no-a be scare. We all-a good-a kind fellas—no hurt-a you.

BRICK. Sure. Yer safer wid us than ye'd be wid yer own mudder. Say, why didn't ya bring yer big sister wid ya? (*He laughs boisterously and suggestively, in which he is joined by TONY.*)

TONY. That's-a good. (*Laughs—just a nasty laugh, then anxiously—to the DEACON*) You say forty miles for next stops, eh?

DEACON. Forty miles as the crow flies. (*Turns up L.*)

BRICK. (*Leaning against door*) Two hours more on dis ole ice-wagon. Time enough for eats an' a good ole nap.

TONY. I need-a sleeps, but I stay-a wake on thees-a trains.

BRICK. Kick in wid de grub, all o' youse. I'm dere wid two hard-boiled an' a slice o' Sweitzer. (*He produces from his coat pocket two eggs and a*

dirt-begrimed slice of cheese, wrapped in newspaper.)

TONY. I gotta two banana lef'. I steal-a from blind wop when he's no look. *(He produces two bananas, hands them to BRICK and goes down R.)*

BRICK. *(To JOHN)* How about you, Bo?

JOHN. *(Up C.)* Here's a couple of sandwiches. *(He produces same and adds them to the collection.)*

DEACON. I believe, gentlemen, I have a can of Sterno—*(Cheers from BRICK and JOHN)*—and—*(He produces small can from his pocket and shakes it)* Yes—a bit of Java.

BRICK. Hurray! Where's dat coffee pot? *(JOHN goes down R.)* Tony, get dat bottle o' water.

TONY. *(Gets bottle and can from upstage R. and hands them to BRICK.)* I need-a coffee, for keep-a me wake.

BRICK. *(Hands DEACON the coffee pot)* There ya are, old card-shark. Go to it. *(THE DEACON busies himself with Sterno, preparing the coffee; BRICK goes over to the BOY.)* Come t'rough, kid—whadda ya got?

BOY. Nothing.

BRICK. Let's see whatcha got? *(He grabs up the BOY's parcel. L. of BOY.)*

BOY. *(Rising, fearfully)* No, no! Please! That's mine.

BRICK. *(Tearing open parcel)* Nuthin' doin'. We's all togedder. *(Abruptly)* What th' hell! *(This ejaculation has been caused by BRICK's drawing several articles of cheap feminine wearing apparel from the BOY's parcel; holds up chemise.)*

TONY. *(Joining BRICK)* Maybe he's-a go for meet-a his sweethearts, eh?

(READY Lights.)

BRICK. What'er ya doin' wit' this layout, buddy?

THE BOY. *(Falteringly)* They—they're my sister's.

TONY. Maybe he's a girl!

BRICK. (*Grabs her, pushes TONY back*) Come here, kiddo.

(THE DEACON *has risen to his feet and joined the others. THE BOY struggles helplessly to escape from BRICK, who by now has forced him to a position directly under the lantern's rays. He jerks off the BOY's hat, revealing a heavy mass of girl's hair.*)

TONY. By God, he is a girl! (*With a licentious snarl, TONY springs forward.*) She's-a mine! (BRICK *throws TONY down L.*)

BRICK. Lay off, ya damn Guinea!

GIRL. Let me go! Let me go!

BRICK. (*Seizing her*) Take it easy, Babe. The angels must have sent ye to me—ye're all mine! (*He tears her shirt—business—she screams.*)

DEACON. (*Sternly*) Not so rough, my friend.

BRICK. (*Holding GIRL*) Now get this—youse guys—I ain't gonna share her wit' nobody—see?

JOHN. You'll have to lick me first. (*Crosses up to BRICK. They are about to exchange blows.*)

TONY. Same-a here! (*Crosses up to BRICK.*)

DEACON. Wait! Wait! (*They wait.*) We can settle this all very quickly.

BRICK. How?

DEACON. With these. (*Showing cards.*)

BRICK. Nothin' doin' with them hoodoos, you Psalm-singing card shark!

TONY. With de cards—he win her quick.

BRICK. You said a mouthful. (THE GIRL *tries to make a break.*) No, you don't, Babe. (*Seizes her.*)

GIRL. Let me go! Let me go!

BRICK. One of us is going to win ya . . . and I got a hunch it's gonna be me.



"ALIAS THE DEACON"

DEACON. She's not yours yet! (JOHN springs at BRICK.)

BRICK. Ain't she . . . we'll see! (BRICK meets JOHN's rush with a R. uppercut, which lands JOHN offstage R. THE DEACON throws TONY off. THE DEACON and TONY engage in a scrap down L. BRICK grabs the lantern.) Come on, ya bums! Try and get her! (He smashes lantern against door. The car is thrown in darkness.)

(LIGHTS Off.)

(THE GIRL opens door, which shows moving trees, woods, etc. JOHN and THE GIRL are seen to jump out of car. TONY fires a revolver.)

(NOTE: As soon as the fight starts the engine effect is heard—bell rings, etc.—and after the shot is fired the engine whistle blows a long blast and—)

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

Alias The Deacon

ACT I

SCENE: *Office of the "Commercial House," a typical midwestern small town hotel.*

The main entrance is upper L. The door is set obliquely and when opened reveals a corner of the hotel veranda. A large sliding door at R.C. back opens into the dining-room, a section of which is visible, when this door is opened. There are large casement windows at both upper and lower L., with several lounging chairs set facing them. A stairway, accentuated by a newel-post, starts at R.2, which leads off R. Below this stairway, at lower R., is the hotel desk, with its attendant cash register, hotel register, etc., and a small display case, containing cigars, candy, etc.

TIME: *Evening—a week later.*

AT RISE: *MRS. CLARK, proprietor of the "Commercial House," is discovered seated behind the hotel desk. She is a vivacious, attractive, charming widow of forty. Her chic summer frock indicates that MRS. CLARK makes some pretense at fashion. MRS. CLARK has two pet hobbies—her son WILLIE and auction bridge. She is now looking over a number of papers, evidently bills, and making figures on a pad. WILLIE CLARK enters via the veranda. He is a diminutive, in-*

quisitive and extremely alert, typically "BOOTH TARKINGTON" boy of fourteen. He is attired in a baseball uniform and carries a bat, a catcher's mitt and a ball. Obviously he has recently participated in the national game.

WILLIE. Hello, Ma. (*Crosses to R.*)

MRS. CLARK. You're late for dinner, Sonny.

WILLIE. It was a long game.

MRS. CLARK. Did your team win?

WILLIE. Well, we woulda won if the "Kansas Tigers" hadn't a' rung a bunch a' ringers in on us, an' "Bullet" Jones had a let me pitch, like I offered to.

MRS. CLARK. (*Fondly*) I'm sure you'd have done splendidly, dear. (*Willie starts up.*) What was the final score?

WILLIE. Twenty-six to two.

MRS. CLARK. Mercy on us!

WILLIE. Oh, I dunno. They didn't have no walk-away at that. We'll get 'em nex' Sat'day if I'm in the box.

(He deposits his baseball paraphernalia L. of dining room doors as JIM CUNNINGHAM enters from the veranda. He is a somewhat corpulent, small-token business man, about forty, alert, affable in bearing. From the heavy watch chain which graces his vest there are suspended several emblems of the various orders to which he belongs.)

CUNNINGHAM. (*Crossing to desk. Consulting his watch*) Sorry to be late, Mrs. Clark, but I'm a man that always keeps his promise.

MRS. CLARK. I knew you wouldn't fail me, Mr. Cunningham. You'd better go in and get your dinner, Willie.

CUNNINGHAM. Yes, Willie, a growing athlete shouldn't neglect his stomach. (*WILLIE exits into dining room.*) Would have been here at four, but had a very busy day. Had to rush work on an extra fire-escape for my picture theatre, and I've been hustling getting the rink ready for the fight—the boxing contest tonight. (*Produces a bill folder from inner coat pocket.*)

MRS. CLARK. I find I'm not able to meet this month's bills, and I can't bear to keep my creditors waiting.

CUNNINGHAM. A very good idea.

MRS. CLARK. Oh, dear, I am beginning to think a woman has no business trying to run a hotel.

CUNNINGHAM. (*He produces a check, already made out*) Five hundred was what you wanted, wasn't it?

MRS. CLARK. (*Accepts check*) Thank you. You've been so awfully kind to me. I really feel guilty about taking advantage of your generosity.

CUNNINGHAM. Never hesitate to call on me.

MRS. CLARK. This makes a total of twenty-five hundred, doesn't it?

CUNNINGHAM. That's right.

MRS. CLARK. Have you the note made out for this last five hundred?

CUNNINGHAM. (*Handing her note. She signs*) I've made out a new note covering the full amount. I figured that would be simpler. Here are the other notes you signed—you can tear them up. (*Places notes on desk. She returns him note she has just signed.*)

MRS. CLARK. Thank you.

(*ED KING, the local sheriff, enters from veranda. He is a rather tall, pleasant, capable-looking man of forty. Comes slowly down to L.C.*)

CUNNINGHAM. You're welcome. Is Mr. Sullivan in?

MRS. CLARK. I believe he is in the dining room with Mr. Moran.

CUNNINGHAM. Moran's opponent hasn't arrived yet. I'm expecting him on the seven-thirty. (*He starts up, discovers KING.*) Hello, Ed.

KING. How do, Jim?

CUNNINGHAM. Don't miss tonight's bout; it's going to be a corker. And, say, Ed, be sure to be there. We may want you for referee.

KING. I'll be there, Jim. (CUNNINGHAM *exits into dining room.*)

MRS. CLARK. (*Glancing up from her work*) Good evening, Ed. (*She returns to her figures. KING crosses slowly over to desk. MRS. CLARK, realizing he has not answered her, glances up to discover that KING is observing her closely.*) What's the matter, Ed?

KING. Mary, you've been borrowing money from Jim Cunningham.

MRS. CLARK. Why, yes. He was kind enough to help me out of a pretty bad hole.

KING. Yes. Jim's helped a number of our citizens out of bad holes. That's why he's such a heavy holder of local real estate.

MRS. CLARK. I've always considered Mr. Cunningham a very honest man.

KING. He keeps within the law all right, but I happen to know how he got hold of old man Blunt's hardware store and the Eagle Laundry and a lot of other places.

MRS. CLARK. (*Chidingly*) Why is it, Ed King, that a Sheriff always seems to be looking for trouble?

KING. Mary, if there weren't any troubles there wouldn't be any sheriffs.

(MRS. GREGORY and her daughter LUELLA emerge from the dining room. MRS. GREGORY is a tall, angular, but rather good-looking woman of forty-five. In consequence of her ambition to be known as a leader in the small town's social circle, MRS. GREGORY carries herself with the flair of "a woman of the world." She is rather modishly attired and is addicted to cosmetics. LUELLA is a rather pretty girl of twenty, languidly coy, and radiating what her mother would term "personality," but which an unbiased observer might call "simple." She is attractively attired in a summer frock of light material.)

MRS. GREGORY. Oh, my dear— Hello, Mr. King— (KING bows and exits to dining room)—Your dinner was perfectly delicious, but it's too bad you're obliged to cater to such a mixed crowd. Wherever did those two awful creatures who sat next to us come from?

LUELLA. I thought the little man would swallow his knife any minute. (*Sits chair L. of centre table, and looks at magazine.*)

MRS. GREGORY. Who are they, my dear?

MRS. CLARK. Mr. Moran, I believe, is one of the fighters who is to appear at the rink tonight. Mr. Sullivan is his manager.

MRS. GREGORY. That explains why Jim Cunningham is in there hobnobbing with them. (*She takes up a book from the desk.*) Oh, I see you are consulting Foster on bridge, my dear.

MRS. CLARK. Yes. I know now that I should never have lost that four-no-trump hand last night. Foster says— (*Consults book.*)

LUELLA. But I had nine diamonds.

MRS. GREGORY. So naturally I led my diamond.

(WILLIE re-enters from dining room.)

MRS. CLARK. Before I could get the lead it seemed like there must have been *twenty* diamonds in the pack.

MRS. GREGORY. Shall we play again tonight, my dear?

MRS. CLARK. I really shouldn't—but—

WILLIE. (*Crosses down R.C.*) G'wan, Ma, play. She's got all your money.

MRS. CLARK. Hush, Willie.

WILLIE. Well, hasn't she gone and hooked you and poor ole Mrs. Bacon for enough to buy a new tin Lizzie?

MRS. CLARK. Willie!

(*WILLIE crosses up, gets bat and ball, and starts upstairs. MRS. GREGORY covers her embarrassment with a confused giggle. WILLIE goes halfway upstairs.*)

LUELLA. Isn't Willie a perfect scream?

MRS. GREGORY. Your luck is bound to turn, my dear. Shall we assemble at the usual hour tonight?

MRS. CLARK. (*Firmly*) No, I really cannot afford to lose any more money.

MRS. GREGORY. Very well. But you must let me pay for the dinners.

MRS. CLARK. No, indeed. I invited you.

MRS. GREGORY. I'd much rather you did.

WILLIE. (*On the stairs*) G'wan, Ma, take it.

MRS. CLARK. Willie. Go up and change your clothes.

WILLIE. Gee! (*Ascending stairs.*) I forgot, I'm going to take Miss Halliday to the movies tonight. (*He exits up the stairs.*)

MRS. GREGORY. Miss Halliday?

MRS. CLARK. My new waitress.

MRS. GREGORY. (*Severely*) My dear, do you permit Willie to associate with the help?

MRS. CLARK. He's very democratic. He's taken a great liking to Miss Halliday. She's teaching him to play the piano. She's a great help to me. My guests like her.

MRS. GREGORY. Where did you find her, my dear?

MRS. CLARK. She came last Friday and told me quite frankly that she was without funds and willing to do any kind of work.

MRS. GREGORY. Have you made inquiries about her? You can't be too particular about new servants.

MRS. CLARK. You're right. You can't be too particular. I'm glad enough to get her.

MRS. GREGORY. Well—(*Shrugs shoulders*)—Then you wouldn't care to play a few rubbers to-night, my dear?

MRS. CLARK. (*Firmly*) No. I'll never gamble again.

MRS. GREGORY. Just as you feel. Come along, Luella. (*She and LUELLA are about to exit up L.C.*)

MRS. CLARK. Oh, Mrs. Gregory. (*MRS. GREGORY and LUELLA halt and turn.*) I think I'll play to-night after all.

MRS. GREGORY. (*Laughs*) I felt sure you would.

MRS. CLARK. It just occurred to me that if we were to call the game off, Mrs. Bacon would be terribly disappointed.

MRS. GREGORY. Of course. I feel sure you'll have better luck tonight.

LUELLA. I just *know* you will.

MRS. GREGORY. We'll just take a short drive in our coupe and come right back. Come, Luella. (*Ad lib. from dining room.*)

(*MRS. GREGORY exits, and LUELLA is about to follow when BULL MORAN and SLIM SULLIVAN, his manager, followed by CUNNINGHAM and ED KING, appear from the dining room. "BULL" is a husky, rough-and-ready, small-time, middle-*

weight pugilist. SLIM is a slender, dapper and, in a sporting way, unusually good-looking young man, about thirty. He is attired in a well-tailored gray suit and possesses a rather winning personality.)

SLIM. (*As they enter*) Any referee suits me, so long as we get a square deal. (*SLIM gives LUELLA the eye and she smiles and exits.*)

CUNNINGHAM. Ed King has refereed our last three bouts and there's never been a squawk.

KING. Of course, boys, if you'd rather have somebody else—

BULL. Brother, ya looks like a square guy ta me, even if ya are th' Sheriff.

CUNNINGHAM. Then it's settled.

SLIM. O.K. with me.

KING. (*Crossing to L.*) If I'm going to referee tonight, I'd better run over to the jail and arrange with my deputy to keep an eye on things. (*KING and CUNNINGHAM exit via veranda, ad libbing as they go.*)

BULL. (*Speaking through the ad lib. of KING and CUNNINGHAM, to MRS. CLARK, who is back of hotel desk*) Gimme a coupla dem two for a quarter Chancellors, will you, Sister? (*He throzes a silver dollar on the showcase. MRS. CLARK serves him; returns his change.*) Say, lady, I gotta hand it to yer. That was some feed—and me havin' to hit it light on account of me fight t'night. (*Putting cigar in mouth and turning, crossing to SLIM, L.C.*)

SLIM. When yer finished those you'll be all set to kiss the canvas.

BULL. Ah, what'a ya talkin'—

(*PHYLLIS HALLIDAY appears from the dining room. She is neatly attired in a maid's outfit of pink gingham and is now revealed as a slender, re-*

fined, extremely attractive, and extremely shy, slip of a girl of eighteen.)

PHYLLIS. Mrs. Clark, your dinner's on the table.

MRS. CLARK. Thank you, Phyllis. *(She starts for the dining room. PHYLLIS takes her place behind the desk.)* Just call me, if there are any arrivals.

PHYLLIS. Yes, Mrs. Clark.

(MRS. CLARK exits to dining room. PHYLLIS busies herself tidying up the showcase. Both SLIM and BULL have been observing her admiringly. BULL adjusts his tie, goes over to the desk.)

BULL. Say, you're th' head-waiter, clerk and everything around here, ain't you?

PHYLLIS. I'm kept pretty busy.

BULL. *(Leaning over desk)* Ya know, they's somethin' 'bout a workin' girl that makes a hit with me. I met a workin' girl once back in Youngstown. She was dishin' up gum drops at Woolworth's. It was a case of love at first sight—*(Turns front, in disgusted tones)*—But wasn't it just me luck to be tied up with a Century-plant from Flatbush. So what could I do—

SLIM. *(Crosses to c.)* You can slip over to the rink and take a slant at the advance sale.

BULL. *(Crosses to him)* Hey, what're you me manager for?

SLIM. I've got to stick here and have a talk with Kid McCabe and his manager. They'll pull in on the seven-thirty. Now, you tell Cunningham he's got to hand us our end before you step into the ring, or there'll be no fight.

BULL. That's talkin'—*(He starts for veranda door, turns, and sees SLIM go to desk)*—An', say, keep yer mind on th' fight. *(He glances significantly at the embarrassed PHYLLIS.)*

SLIM. Get out of here. (BULL *exits*. SLIM *goes to desk. Pleasantly to PHYLLIS*) You'll have to excuse him, Girlie. When he left Harvard he forgot his diploma. How about a package of Lucky Strikes?

PHYLLIS. Certainly. (She hands him pack of cigarettes.)

SLIM. (Opening up cigarettes) Wasn't that you I heard singin' in there before the dinin' room opened?

PHYLLIS. You might have.

SLIM. Oh, baby! Say—you've got a wonderful voice.

PHYLLIS. I'm afraid you're flattering me.

SLIM. No, I'm not. You got too much class to be slingin' hash in a yap joint like this. Why, you could be knockin' 'em dead and pullin' down some real change in the big towns.

PHYLLIS. Why, I've never taken a singing lesson in my life.

SLIM. You're just full of natural talent. Now, I've got a friend in Chicago that's a wiz when it comes to developin' singin' voices, and when he gets through with you, you can pull down more change in a week than you can make here in a year. (Snaps cigar lighter, which is disconnected.)

PHYLLIS. Thank you, but I don't think I'd care to try it. Oh, I believe that's out of order. (She hands him a box of matches from underneath counter.)

SLIM. (Lights cigarette) Thanks. Is yer home in this town?

PHYLLIS. I'm making my home here now.

SLIM. (Looking L.) All alone in a big city, eh? (Leaning across desk to her.) Now, don't mention to anybody what I'm goin' to tell yer, but I'm in a position to land you right. New York and Chicago cabarets are just crying for girls like you.

PHYLLIS. But I don't want to go to New York or Chicago.

SLIM. I'm not takin' "no" for an answer. We'll have a little talk later. Oh, I almost forgot to pay you for the cigarettes. *(He hands PHYLLIS a bill. She deposits same in cash register.—As she is making change)* Oh, that's all right. Keep the change.

(JOHN enters up L., takes in situation.)

PHYLLIS. Oh, no, thank you.

SLIM. Now, listen— *(He takes up the coins, seizes PHYLLIS' hand, into which he attempts to place the coins.)*

PHYLLIS. *(Tries to free her hand)* Please!

SLIM. *(Strengthening his grip)* Now, don't be bashful, girlie. A pretty little hand like that has no business fooling around the kitchen.

PHYLLIS. Please!—please don't! *(JOHN starts slowly towards desk.)*

SLIM. *(Still retaining PHYLLIS' hand)* Now, don't get me wrong, girlie— *(JOHN has by now reached R.C. He addresses SLIM quietly.)*

JOHN. If I were you, I wouldn't hold her hand, if she didn't want me to.

SLIM. *(Turns coolly)* No?

JOHN. *(Smilingly)* No.

SLIM. *(Realizing JOHN is her beau)* Oh! *(Releases PHYLLIS' hand, takes hat from desk; starts up—sarcastically)* Thanks for the information.

JOHN. *(Kidding SLIM)* You're welcome. *(SLIM continues on his way and exits. Goes to PHYLLIS and grabs her hands and kisses them. Playing the following scene over the counter.)* What was that fellow saying to you? *(Places his cap on cigar case.)*

PHYLLIS. Oh, I guess he didn't mean any harm. He bought some cigarettes and was trying to make me keep the change.

JOHN. Just a big-hearted boy. Well, never mind, honey, you won't have to stand for this stuff much longer. (*He draws a small pay envelope from his pocket, hands same to PHYLLIS.*)

PHYLLIS. (*Glancing at envelope*) What's this?

JOHN. Open it. (*PHYLLIS quickly opens the envelope, from which she extracts bill.*)

PHYLLIS. Twenty dollars.

JOHN. My first week's pay—just as they handed it to me at the garage. Listen, Phyllis. It's the first real money I've ever worked for in my life. (*Thumping his chest.*) John Adams—champion car-washer of Kelly's garage!

PHYLLIS. Never mind, John—I'm so proud of you. What are you going to do with it?

JOHN. You're the banker, Honey. That twenty dollars is going to be our nest-egg. You're going to keep it, and every week there'll be twenty more until—

PHYLLIS. But, John, you've got to live. You can't save it all.

JOHN. (*Drawing some change from his pocket, jingles same*) Oh, can't I? A dollar-ten in tips to-day, and do you know what I can get at "Joe, the Greek's," for a quarter?

PHYLLIS. Oh, that awful place and that terrible food. How can you stand it?

JOHN. Honey, you just massage twenty flivvers a day and then side up to a pan of Joe's beans, all browned on top and appliqued with strips of bacon, and even the sight of greasy Joe won't phase you.

PHYLLIS. Oh, John, how can you?

JOHN. Let's forget that. (*Looking around office to see that they are unobserved*) Now, listen. When we get two hundred dollars together we're goin' to tell Mrs. Clark to look for another girl.

PHYLLIS. Oh, no, John, not for a long time. My little bit will help, too.

JOHN. But you can't work here if you're going to keep house for us.

PHYLLIS. What house?

JOHN. Our house. (*He produces from his coat pocket a photograph, which he extends eagerly to PHYLLIS.*) Five rooms, all modern conveniences, bath—a little one, but a bath. Nice little veranda, just room for a rocking chair—and us. (*He props photo against inkwell.*)

PHYLLIS. (*Enchanted—gazing at the photograph*) Isn't it lovely! Oh, John! It's darling.

JOHN. And plenty of space in our back yard for a nice little garden for vegetables and flowers and everything.

PHYLLIS. (*Studying photograph more closely*) But where is the back yard? I can't see it.

JOHN. You could if it wasn't for the house. (*He executes a sweeping gesture behind picture.*) All back there, nothing but back yard.

PHYLLIS. (*Taking up photo*) But, John, it's marked two thousand/dollars.

JOHN. Dirt cheap.

PHYLLIS. (*Looks longingly at picture*) We'd have to work so long to save two thousand dollars.

JOHN. That's just it, Honey. We don't have to have two thousand dollars. The minute we get *two hundred* dollars we can move in.

PHYLLIS. I don't understand.

JOHN. Of course. You're not a business woman. I'll explain. Mr. Wells, the real estate man that owns the property, parks his flivver at our garage. Well, the other day I noticed some of these pictures he had left in the car, and—well, to cut a long story short, I had a little business talk with Mr. Wells, and—two hundred down and fifty a month.

PHYLLIS. But, John, where's the furniture?

JOHN. Stransky's. (*He flips an illustrated circular from his pocket—spreads it out on the downstage*

section of the desk so that during the following speech both he and PHYLLIS are facing front, their heads close together as they inspect the circular, from which JOHN reads) "You furnish the bride and we'll furnish the house.—(*Pause.*)—Five rooms completely and artistically furnished for only four hundred and thirteen dollars. Hand us fifty dollars and our van will back up to your door and feather your nest with these exquisite furnishings—the remainder due to be paid at the monthly rate of eighteen dollars." I tell you. Honey, it's much more economical to marry on the installment plan.

PHYLLIS. I guess it is, John. (*Smiles.*)

JOHN. (*Folding circular*) What do you say, Honey? Next month?

PHYLLIS. I'd love to, John. I want to, but suppose we did marry, and then *he* came.

JOHN. Let him come. We'd be married. I'd like to see him take you away then.

PHYLLIS. He is my guardian.

JOHN. I can't understand why they ever let a rotten old dog like that Dr. Saunders take a decent little girl like you. (*Replaces circular in right coat pocket.*)

PHYLLIS. When he adopted me everybody said I was a very lucky girl, and he was nice to me until Mrs. Saunders died, then he—well, I've told you how he acted.

JOHN. You did the right thing to run away and if he ever bothers you again, Honey, he'll do his counting in the hospital. (*Picks up picture. WILLIE emerges on balcony, attired in his regular clothes. Runs down stairs.*)

WILLIE. Hello, Mr. Adams.

JOHN. Hello, Willie. I hear you got walloped today.

WILLIE. (*Alibying*) Well, we got our signals all mixed and—



JOHN. When are you going to play again?

WILLIE. Three o'clock Saturday—rain or shine.

JOHN. I'll try to get over if I can get away.

(*Turns again to PHYLLIS.*)

WILLIE. Gee, that'll be great. Say, can you pitch?

JOHN. They used to say I could at Prep School.

WILLIE. Holy Smokes, mebbe we can ring you in against the Tigers.

JOHN. Do you think they'd stand for it?

WILLIE. Sure, ya'd be in *short pants*—(*Pause*)—an' besides, they gotta couple a' ringers 'bout your size. Will ya twirl f'r us Sat'day?

JOHN. Sure, if you can fix it.

WILLIE. Gee, they'll be nothin' to it— (*He starts L. on the run.*) I gotta put our manager wise. (*He dashes out through the veranda door.*)

JOHN. (*Glimcing at clock*) Say! Look at that time. I'd better be getting down to Joe's before all the beans are gone. (*Goes L.C.*)

PHYLLIS. Oh, John, I've got an idea. This cigar lighter is broken. If you'll fix it, I think Mrs. Clark might invite you to eat dinner here.

JOHN. (*Crossing to desk*) I'll fix the lighter, but I'll dine at Joe's. (*He starts to work on the lighter.*) Mrs. Clark's done enough for me, letting me have that little hall room for three-fifty a week. One of these wires is broken.

(*During the following scene JOHN repairs the cigar lighter by connecting the two broken wires and tapeing them.*)

PHYLLIS. Your thumb must be better—the swelling has gone down. I was afraid you'd broken it.

JOHN. Bad sprain, that's all. That red-headed hobo must have an iron jaw.

PHYLLIS. Oh, that awful night.

JOHN. Let's forget all about that, Honey. The

only thing I ever want to remember about that night is that I met you. Gee, I'm glad I hopped that freight.

PHYLLIS. I'm glad I did.

JOHN. Are you?

PHYLLIS. Uh, huh.

JOHN. And just think, Honey, when we move into our little home we'll have a great old family skeleton to lay away in the closet.

PHYLLIS. And we'll never show it to anybody.

JOHN. It makes me feel rotten to see you working so hard—washing dishes and—

PHYLLIS. You're washing *cars*.

JOHN. Sure, but they're big things. (*Both laugh.*) But don't you worry, little girl; they're not going to keep us splashing water forever.

PHYLLIS. You bet they're not. (*JOHN embraces her and kisses her, with his left hand on the handle of the lighter, which sparks and flames at the end of their long kiss.*) Oh, John, the lighter's working.

JOHN. Love does wonders.

(*MRS. CLARK enters from dining room, down R.C.*)

MRS. CLARK. Good evening, Mr. Adams.

JOHN. (*Takes up hat*) Good evening, Mrs. Clark. Good night, Phyllis. (*He crosses L. as if to exit on veranda.*)

PHYLLIS. (*Quickly*) Oh, Mrs. Clark, John's fixed the lighter. (*She tries lighter several times to demonstrate this.*)

MRS. CLARK. (*Quickly*) Thank you, Mr. Adams, you're a handy man to have about the house. Have you had your dinner?

JOHN. (*Coming back to c.*) Well—

PHYLLIS. He was just going out to dinner when I asked him to fix the lighter.

MRS. CLARK. Won't you have dinner here?

JOHN. (*Stammering*) Oh—no, thank you, Mrs. Clark. I don't think I'd better. (*He starts immediately for door.*)

MRS. CLARK. (*Temptingly*) Fried chicken and sweet potatoes.

JOHN. Oh, boy! (*He changes his course abruptly and exits to the dining room.*)

MRS. CLARK. Phyllis, you'd better wait on him.

PHYLLIS. Oh, Mrs. Clark, you're a dear. (*She exits to dining room; MRS. CLARK goes behind desk.*)

(*WILLIE enters from the veranda.*)

WILLIE. Gee, Ma, whadda ya think? Mr. Adams is going to pitch for us Sat'day.

(*WARN Phone.*)

MRS. CLARK. No!—(*The telephone bell rings*)—That will be fine—(*She takes up phone*) Hello! Mr! Sullivan? I don't think he's in.

WILLIE. He's sittin' out on the veranda. (*Crosses to door up L.C.*) I'll get him.

MRS. CLARK. Just a moment, please. (*This conversation is carried on simultaneously,*

WILLIE. Mr. Sullivan.

MRS. CLARK. We're trying to find him. (*so that MRS. CLARK does*

WILLIE. Mr. Sullivan.

SLIM. (*Off L. on veranda*) Yes. (*not wait for WILLIE'S*

WILLIE. You're wanted on the phone. (*and SLIM'S lines.*)

(*SLIM enters from veranda.*)

SLIM. (*Crossing to desk*) Thanks, young fellow!

MRS. CLARK. Here he is now—just hold the wire, please. (*She lays down receiver of phone and crosses to WILLIE.*)

SLIM. Thanks, Mrs. Clark. (*Takes up phone.*)

MRS. CLARK. Willie, keep an eye on the desk until Miss Halliday has finished her dinner.

SLIM. (*Into phone*) Yes, this is Sullivan.

MRS. CLARK. I'm going to run over to Mrs. Bacon's for a minute. (*Crosses to veranda and exits.*)
WILLIE *goes behind desk.*)

SLIM. (*Into phone*) What's that? Well, can you beat it?

WILLIE. Anything wrong?

SLIM. (*In phone*) Sprained his ankle? Who says so? Ah, it's just a case of run out. I always knew that bird was yellow! (*Slams down phone, crossing to L.*) The fight's cooked, and with a sell-out, too. Now we gotta hand the customers their money back. (*Paces angrily up and down L.*)

WILLIE. Gee, Mr. Sullivan, ain't there goin' to be any fight?

SLIM. How can there be—there's nobody to fight him. Bull can't fight himself.

WILLIE. (*Eagerly*) Say, I betcha I know a man that'll fight him.

SLIM. Who?

WILLIE. Wait a minute. (*He rushes up to dining room doors, and calls excitedly*) Mr. Adams. Mr. Adams! Can I see you a minute, please?

SLIM. Hey, who's Adams?

WILLIE. (*Coming down L. of counter*) The greatest all-round athlete in the world—that's who he is. He's a champion pitcher and can fix cars and fight and do anything. (*JOHN appears from dining room.*)

JOHN. (*Coming down c.*) What's on your mind, Willie?

WILLIE. (*Rapidly in one breath*) Listen, Mr. Adams, Bull Moran's manager says the other fighter ain't goin' to show up and they got to give all the

money back, so I told Mr. Sullivan that *you'd* fight Bull Moran.

JOHN. Oh, you did? (*Laughs.*)

SLIM. (*As JOHN turns to him*) Oh, you're the bird that butted in on my conversation with that classy little waitress, eh?

JOHN. Yes. If I were you I wouldn't annoy her again.

WILLIE. I'll tell the world.

SLIM. So you think you're a scrapper, eh?

JOHN. Guess I can take care of myself.

SLIM. Ever been in the ring?

JOHN. I've done quite a lot of amateur boxing.

SLIM. Think you could stick a few rounds with a real fighter

JOHN. Hey, wait a minute!

WILLIE. Hey!—how much would there be in it for him?

JOHN. (*Indicating WILLIE*) My manager.

SLIM. Now, listen. If you think you can put up a fight that'll satisfy the customers, I can fix it with Cunningham to guarantee you a hundred bucks.

JOHN. (*Feeling pocket for picture and circular, then quickly*) Make it *two hundred*, and I'm your man.

WILLIE. That's talking.

SLIM. All right. *Two hundred*, if you stick the ten rounds.

JOHN. You're on!

SLIM. How much do you weigh?

JOHN. Hundred and fifty.

SLIM. Good. Live here?

JOHN. No, I blew in about a week ago. I'm working at Kelly's Garage.

SLIM. What's your name again?

JOHN. John Adams.

SLIM. (*Writing*) We'll announce you as "Cy-

clone Adams," a comer from the Coast—— (*Starts for veranda door.*)

JOHN. How about the two hundred?

SLIM. That's all right—— I'll fix it with Cunningham. Come on, now. We better shoot right over to the rink and get everything set. (*Exits.*)

JOHN. (*Following*) Right with you.

WILLIE. (*Following*) Same here.

JOHN. (*Stopping him*) Nothing doing, Willie. You stay here. I don't want to get in wrong with your mother.

WILLIE. Ah, gee. I gotta see that fight.

JOHN. Now be a good kid, Willie, and I'll buy you a new catcher's mitt, and, remember, not a word about this to anybody. Understand?

WILLIE. All right.

SLIM. (*Appearing on veranda*) Come on, come on, Adams. Hurry up. (*He exits, and JOHN follows him off.*)

WILLIE. (*Up in doorway, calling after them*) Hey, Mr. Adams, I hope you knock his block off! (*Comes downstage, thinking. Suddenly runs up to dining room doors—calls off*) Miss Halliday! Miss Halliday! Can I see you a minute, please? (*WILLIE comes downstage L.*)

PHYLLIS. (*Appears from dining room*) What is it—(*Crosses down R.C.*)—Willie? (*Looks around.*) Where is John?

WILLIE. He just went out. Say, Miss Halliday, would you mind keeping an eye on things? Because I got some important business to attend to. (*Starts for veranda door.*)

PHYLLIS. (*Down R.C.*) Willie, where did John go?

WILLIE. He—he—went—well, I promised not to tell anybody.

PHYLLIS. Willie.

WILLIE. (*Down to her*) Everything's going to be

all right, Miss Halliday, 'cause I betcha John's goin-
to *knock his block off*.

PHYLLIS. Willie! Is John in trouble?

WILLIE. Two hundred dollars' worth.

PHYLLIS. What?

WILLIE. That's what he's goin' to get for fightin'
Bull Moran at the rink tonight.

PHYLLIS. Oh, is that what you called him for?

WILLIE. Sure! I fixed it! They only wanted to
give him a hundred bucks, but Mr. Adams said
nothin' doin' unless he got two hundred, and I backed
him up, so Mr. Sullivan said all right. (*Starts for
door.*)

PHYLLIS. (*Starting after him*) Oh, he mustn't do
that.

WILLIE. Oh, it's all right.

PHYLLIS. Willie, where is the rink?

WILLIE. (*Stopping her*) Ah, gee, Miss Halliday,
you couldn't get in even if I was with you.

(MRS. CLARK *entering from veranda and crossing
to desk.*)

MRS. CLARK. Oh, Phyllis, I wish you'd help Nora
prepare the sandwiches for my bridge party. (PHYLLIS
crosses to dining room doors.) And you might
bring them upstairs when they're ready.

PHYLLIS. Yes, Mrs. Clark.

(*She exits into dining room, closing the doors.*)

NOTE: *At this point turn out the light in dining
room, leaving it rather dim. WILLIE trying to
exit noiselessly through doors to veranda. MRS.
CLARK sees him.*)

MRS. CLARK. Willie! (WILLIE *halts.*) Where are
you going?

WILLIE. (*Coming back, and making up story as*

he goes along) Say, listen, Ma. on account of Mr. Adams goin' to pitch for us next Sat'day I better run over to Johnny Blake's house and fix up a lot of new signals for our team. (*He starts quickly toward veranda door.*)

MRS. CLARK. Willie Clark, come back here!

WILLIE. (*Reluctantly coming back*) What is it, Ma?

MRS. CLARK. If you want to arrange any signals for your next game, you can fix them up tonight in bed.

WILLIE. But you can't think of signals in bed——

MRS. CLARK. You were out last night until eleven——

WILLIE. But I was just——

MRS. CLARK. Now you go right upstairs and go to bed.

WILLIE. (*Reluctantly mounting the stairs*) Ah, gee—all mothers are alike. What chance has a man got? That's what I'd like to know.

(*He reaches the balcony and exits. MRS. CLARK goes behind the counter, unlocks the cash register, and secures some change and a couple of bills, which she transfers to her bag. She closes and relocks the cash register, turns to the cabinet, from which she removes two new packs of playing cards. These she also places underneath her bag on counter, as the DEACON enters from the veranda. He is now attired in semi-ministerial garb. He approaches the desk, smiles benevolently upon MRS. CLARK, and prepares to register.*)

DEACON. Good evening. (*Placing hat on table c.*) May I inquire your rates, please, with bath? (*Crosses slowly to desk.*)

MRS. CLARK. (*Looking at key-rack*) Certainly.

I have a very pleasant room, southern exposure, with bath, at three dollars.

DEACON. I'll take it. (*He signs the register.*)

MRS. CLARK. (*As he signs register*) I'm sorry our dining room is closed.

DEACON. I've dined, thank you. (*Turns register towards her.*)

MRS. CLARK. (*Reads from register*) Deacon Caswell. I'm accustomed to making special rates to church dignitaries, Deacon. I'll let you have Number Seven for two-fifty a day.

DEACON. (*With a grateful smile*) That's very considerate of you, my dear lady.

MRS. CLARK. I'm sure you'll be comfortable in Number Seven. It adjoins the library and doesn't open into the public hallway. You'll find it very quiet and private.

DEACON. Thank you.

MRS. CLARK. (*Warming to him*) Are you going to be with us long, Deacon?

DEACON. Well—that depends, Sister——

MRS. CLARK. Clark.

DEACON. (*Cordially extending his hand to her*) How do you do, Sister Clark. I am indeed glad to meet you.

MRS. CLARK. Thank you, Deacon.

DEACON. I was about to say, Sister Clark, that the length of my stay in your charming little town depends largely upon the *climate* here.

MRS. CLARK. You're travelling for your *health*?

DEACON. I'm obliged to be very careful of it. I've found several otherwise interesting little towns *extremely unhealthful*.

MRS. CLARK. We have an unusually healthful climate here, I believe. And if I do say it myself, *Herrington* is one of the most prosperous little towns in our State.

DEACON. (*Turning L.*) So I've heard, so I've

heard. I've been looking forward to my visit here. You're—(*Turns to her*)—you're a church member, I trust?

MRS. CLARK. Oh, yes, indeed. Up to the time my husband died I was an active worker in our Church. But when I was obliged to take charge of the hotel——

DEACON. Pardon me. Am I to understand that you are the proprietress of this charming little place?

MRS. CLARK. Yes.

DEACON. Ah! (*He gently rubs his hands together and beams benevolently upon SISTER CLARK*) It must be very hard work for a gentlewoman like yourself. But I daresay you find solace in the Good Book's promise that "Only those of us who toil in the vineyard shall reap their reward." (*Pause.*) I believe, Sister, that included among your patrons are a great many *traveling salesmen*?

MRS. CLARK. Oh, yes, indeed.

DEACON. Ah, that's very interesting. Very interesting! Would you please oblige me with a package of tutti frutti?

MRS. CLARK. Certainly.

(*She reaches into the case, secures a packet, and hands it to THE DEACON. As she does so, she accidentally dislodges her bag from the top of the desk. It falls to the floor, including the two decks of cards. THE DEACON stoops and recovers her property.*)

DEACON. How unfortunate. Allow me.

(*He then straightens up, holding the bag in one hand and the two decks of cards in the other, and smiles benignly upon the flustered MRS. CLARK, who relieves him of her property and hastily returns the cards to her bag.*)

MRS. CLARK. Ah, Deacon, I'm afraid you think me a very wicked woman. I confess I have a weakness for bridge.

DEACON. Come, come; we all have our weaknesses. I don't consider a little game of bridge an unpardonable sin.

MRS. CLARK. Why, Deacon, I'm so glad to hear you say that. Do you ever play?

(*WARN Curtain.*)

DEACON. Well—I have played a little. (*Pause.*)
A very intriguing pastime.

MRS. CLARK. It is, indeed. Of course, you don't play for money?

DEACON. Well—on several occasions, to make up a foursome, rather than disappoint the others, I have contributed various small sums. (*He chuckles pleasantly.*)

MRS. CLARK. I usually contribute myself. How is your game, Deacon?

DEACON. I daresay I'd be a most unwelcome addition to the fold to those who understand the finer points of the game.

MRS. CLARK. I'm sure you must play better than Mrs. Bacon.

DEACON. Eh?

MRS. CLARK. She and I are always partners.

DEACON. Oh!

MRS. CLARK. By the way, she's going to be an hour or so late for our game this evening. I wonder if you wouldn't be willing to substitute?

DEACON. Oh, no. (*He continues gently to protest.*)

MRS. CLARK. Deacon—please.

DEACON. (*Pause—then*) Well—if it's to oblige you, Sister Clark.

MRS. CLARK. I'm sure Mrs. Gregory would be delighted to have you sit in, and, as I say, *we shall only need you for an hour.*

DEACON. (*Crossing down L.*) I daresay that will be long enough.

MRS. CLARK. (*Starting for the stairs, getting key from rack*) I'd better show you to your room now, and I'll call you when we're ready.

DEACON. I shall be entirely at your disposal, Sister Clark.

MRS. CLARK. (*Climbing stairs*) This way, Deacon!

DEACON. (*Purrs*) Uh, huh.

(*Takes up hat, crosses to stairs. MRS. CLARK exits.*

THE DEACON starts to mount the stairs. PHYLLIS enters from dining room, carrying a tray of sandwiches and cakes. She recognizes THE DEACON, who, without seeing her, disappears along the landing. PHYLLIS sets the tray hastily on small table C., goes quickly to the desk and looks at hotel register, then turns to foot of stairs and stands staring fearfully after THE DEACON. She starts slowly upstairs as TONY enters from veranda. On discovering PHYLLIS, he is backing slowly out to veranda, as——)

THE CURTAIN FALLS AND REMAINS LOWERED MOMENTARILY TO INDICATE THE PASSING OF THREE HOURS.

ACT I

SCENE II: *Same as Scene I.*

(The curtain lowered on Scene I, remains down for forty seconds. As soon as the curtain reaches the floor, the foot lights are dimmed to a glow. A clock is heard to strike eleven, and the foot lights are again dimmed up and the curtain rises. About thirty seconds' wait.)

AT RISE: PHYLLIS is discovered at veranda door. *Ad lib. off stairs. She crosses down and looks out upstage window, when MRS. CLARK and MRS. GREGORY appear on the landing and descend the stairs.)*

MRS. CLARK. Certainly—*(Who is obviously in excellent spirits)*—I'll be delighted to cash it for you, dear—if I have that much in the drawer. *(Crosses behind counter to cash drawer.)*

MRS. GREGORY. *(She comes down in front of table, obviously not in excellent spirits. Studies score card)* I never saw such a bad player as the Deacon hold such *marvelous hands*.

MRS. CLARK. I suppose it's only "Beginner's Luck."

MRS. GREGORY. He's positively stupid! Why, within a minute he asked three times what the trump was.

MRS. CLARK. *(Who has opened the cash register and is counting some bills, gayly)* Your prediction is proving true, dear.

MRS. GREGORY. *(Sourly)* What prediction?

MRS. CLARK. Don't you remember, you said I'd have good luck tonight?

MRS. GREGORY. (*Crossing to desk*) Yes; do you realize that between us Luella and I have lost eighty-five dollars tonight?

MRS. CLARK. (*Sweetly*) That's your own fault, dear—you insisted on raising the stakes.

MRS. GREGORY. I lost my head completely when, after I had been foolish enough to bid three spades just to run him up, that stupid man doubled me and *set us four hundred!*

MRS. CLARK. I am certainly glad that Mrs. Bacon couldn't come tonight.

LUELLA. (*Appears on landing, dravels sweetly*) Mother, the Deacon wants to know if you're coming back.

MRS. GREGORY. Well, I said I wouldn't, but I've changed my mind. Such luck can't last forever. (*She joins LUELLA on the landing, passing her.*) Luella, you must pay more attention to my *informatory bids*. (*She exits.*)

LUELLA. (*Simpers*) The Deacon disconcerts me so with his funny stories. (*She exits.*)

MRS. CLARK. (*Ascending the stairs*) Doesn't he tell them well? (*She exits after them.*)

MRS. GREGORY. (*Off R.*) Don't listen to his funny stories.

(PHYLLIS turns from the window, cries out "JOHN," and runs out on veranda, and almost immediately enters with JOHN. His discolored eye and battered appearance indicate that he has taken a bad beating from BULL. PHYLLIS utters a startled cry as she leads JOHN down.)

PHYLLIS. Oh, John, you're hurt.

JOHN. Aw, I'm all right, honey. (*Sits on chair, L. of table. He must appear cheerful.*)

PHYLLIS. Your eye is all cut.

JOHN. Well, Honey, you know I haven't been playing Post Office.

PHYLLIS. Oh, dear, how could you do such a terrible thing?

JOHN. (*Eagerly—excited*) Only ten rounds—for you and the bungalow. He nearly got me in the last round. I was boring in when he caught me with an uppercut that nearly took my head off.

PHYLLIS. Oh!

JOHN. Honey, did you ever see stars that weren't shining? Well, I saw a million. Then I heard the referee counting and I almost went to sleep, when I think Cupid must have shouted in my ear: "You've got the bungalow, Johnnie; get up, kid, and get the furniture." (*He struggles to his feet.*) So I got up and—(*Pause*)—Only I didn't get it. (*Looks away from her.*) I went through the whole thing for nothing.

PHYLLIS. John, what do you mean?

JOHN. (*Turns to her—rapidly*) After the fight I went to Cunningham's office to get my money.

PHYLLIS. He wouldn't pay you?

JOHN. (*Speaks rapidly*) No. I tried to argue with Mr. Cunningham, but he called me a yellow quitter. When he wouldn't pay me I lost my head. After I hit him he didn't get up. A crowd started to gather, and I left.

(SLIM and BULL appear from veranda.)

PHYLLIS. Oh, John—what have you done?

(SLIM and BULL enter from veranda. BULL carries a small black satchel, supposedly containing his ring outfit.)

BULL. (*Coming down to L. of JOHN—places bag on table*) Buddy, you're a game kid, sticking the ten,

but if it had went one more round I'd have copped you sure.

SLIM. (*Down L.*) Gee, that was a piker's trick, Cunningham holding out your money.

BULL. Sure. If you hadn't went on Cunningham would-a had to give all dat money back to the bo-hunks.

SLIM. I don't blame you for takin' a crack at him.

PHYLLIS. Come, dear, you better go to your room. (*PHYLLIS pilots JOHN to the stairs.*)

JOHN. Oh, I'm all right, honey!

BULL. (*When JOHN and PHYLLIS are on stair-way*) Tough break, Buddy. You put up a great scrap. And, hey, listen. If you need any dough you can call on Bull Moran for a piece of change.

JOHN. Thanks, old man. (*He exits on landing with PHYLLIS.*)

BULL. Don't mention it. (*He looks longingly after PHYLLIS*) Gee, I wouldn't mind takin' a beatin' myself if I had a swell doll like that to come home to.

SLIM. What classy dame would ever fall for you?

BULL. (*Turns*) You'd be surprised. Say, Sullivan, while I think of it, slip us some dough. (*Coming down to SLIM.*)

SLIM. I'll give it to you in the morning. (*Turns down L.*)

BULL. Nuthin' doin'—I've heard of guys dyin' in th' night.

SLIM. Slip me some dough! That's all I hear out of you. (*Produces roll, peels off several bills*) Here's a hundred.

BULL. Hey, gimme—

SLIM. No, I'll keep the rest for you. You're liable to meet a skirt, or a bootlegger.

BULL. Say, lissen, kid—when it comes t' chuckin' loose change t' th' skirts, there ain't nobody got nothin' on you. (*Turns R.*)

SLIM. I only deal in class. (*He glances toward*



"ALIAS THE DEACON"

the stairs, obviously hoping PHYLLIS will return.)

BULL. (*Notes this action*) Say, why don't you lay off dat doll?

SLIM. What are you talkin' about?

BULL. Come on, come on, I got you tonight at dinner—tryin' to slip her the old eye stuff.

SLIM. You're crazy.

BULL. (*Deliberately*) Any guy that sugars his Java with salt, aint' got his mind on his lunch.

SLIM. Now, get this, Bull. You keep your nose out of my business. See?

BULL. Say, you better lay off dat doll. This guy Adams is nuts about her.

SLIM. Aha!

BULL. Yeh—and listen: He packs a good enough wallop to lay away a dozen sheiks like you.

SLIM. Yeah?

BULL. And I ain't got no time to waste on funerals. (*Takes bag, crosses to stairs.*)

SLIM. Ah, go and doll up, and start out on your usual "lookin' and wishin'" tour. (*BULL starts upstairs. SLIM sits on table.*)

BULL. (*Pausing on stairs*) Watch me dust. The streets is full of dames right now, waitin' fer th' champion t' take his pick. What are you gonna do?

SLIM. (*Producing deck of cards*) I'm going to stick around and try to pick up a little sucker money.

BULL. (*Turns, on stairs*) You'll never find another boob like that guy ya took over in Peoria.

SLIM. You never can tell. (*ED KING enters from veranda.*)

KING. (*Up L.C.*) Where's this fellow Adams?

SLIM. Just gone upstairs.

KING. (*To BULL*) Tell him to come down here right away, will you?

BULL. Sure, I'll tell him. (*He exits upstairs, talking as he goes*) Hey, Adams, there's a hick dick down here wants to see you. (*Exits.*)

SLIM. (*R. of KING*) What's on your mind, Sheriff?

KING. (*Down L.C.*) Did you see young Adams hit Cunningham?

SLIM. No. When I got there with the crowd, Cunningham was laid out cold and Adams was all set to beat it.

KING. Did Adams say anything to you?

SLIM. I asked him what it was all about, and he told me Cunningham wouldn't give him his money—so he slammed him.

KING. How many people were in the office with Cunningham when you got there?

SLIM. Quite a gang. (*Starts R. to desk.*)

KING. When I got there, Cunningham was on the couch. Who put him there?

(*JOHN enters.*)

SLIM. Me and a couple of others. (*Lights cigarette. JOHN comes downstairs, closely attended by the apprehensive PHYLLIS.*)

JOHN. (*To the Sheriff, coming downstairs*) What is it?

KING. (*Up L.C.*) Adams, you're under arrest.

JOHN. (*Over to Sheriff*) Cunningham?

KING. Yes.

PHYLLIS. Oh! (*Joins JOHN, R.C.*)

JOHN. Is he badly hurt?

KING. He hasn't come around yet. Maybe he won't ever come around.

PHYLLIS. Oh—John. (*She sways, obviously on the verge of fainting. JOHN supports her.*)

JOHN. God—I'm sorry—but he wouldn't give me my money, and—

KING. (*Interrupting*) You ought to have pulled that rough-house stuff in the ring. Come on.

PHYLLIS. (*Weakly, to KING*) You—you're going to take him to jail?

KING. I'm sorry, Miss, but that's where he's got to go.

PHYLLIS. (*Clinging to JOHN*) John!

JOHN. (*Turns to her and holds her hands in a comforting manner for a moment, and then back to KING*) Come on.

(*He accompanies KING out the veranda door. PHYLLIS starts to follow; she stops and stands dazedly looking after him for a moment, and then turns helplessly to SLIM, who is leaning against the counter R., eyeing her hopefully.*)

PHYLLIS. (*Crosses to C.*) What—what are they going to do to him?

SLIM. If Cunningham doesn't pull through, he'll be in pretty bad.

PHYLLIS. But—he didn't mean to do it.

SLIM. (*Crosses to her*) Sure he didn't. But it'll take a mighty nifty lawyer to pound that into the skulls of the jury.

PHYLLIS. (*Directly to him*) How much will a good lawyer cost?

SLIM. Oh, they come high.

PHYLLIS. (*Fearfully*) I—I have no money. (*Turns down L.*)

SLIM. Say, that's tough, little girl. (*Seeing his chance.*) Haven't you got *anybody* you can draw on?

PHYLLIS. No one. You see, we've only been here a week—and we haven't any friends—anywhere. We're—all alone.

SLIM. You're overlooking me when you say that, Girlie.

(*THE DEACON appears quietly on the landing, where he pauses and listens, unseen by PHYLLIS and SLIM.*)

PHYLLIS. Oh, Mr. Sullivan—you mean *you'll* help us.

SLIM. I'll go the *limit*, for you.

PHYLLIS. Oh—oh, thank you.

(Overcome with gratitude, she seizes SLIM's arm and clings to him, gazing eagerly up into his smiling face. Abruptly, over SLIM's shoulder, she discovers the DEACON, L.C., and steps away from SLIM.)

DEACON. *(With a pious smile)* Pardon me, could I have some matches, please—— *(SLIM turns—looks.)*

PHYLLIS. *(Obviously confused and apprehensive at meeting the DEACON face to face)* Why—why, yes, of course. *(Goes quickly to the counter, secures a box of matches and hands same to DEACON.)*

DEACON. *(Smilingly)* Thank you. *(Apparently without recognizing PHYLLIS, turns and exits through door, off landing. PHYLLIS stands looking after him.)*

SLIM. *(C.)* Who is that old bird?

PHYLLIS. *(C. Confused, turns)* He—he's a new guest. *(Dismissing the subject, crosses to him)* Oh, Mr. Sullivan, then you will help us find a good lawyer?

SLIM. The best one I can dig up.

PHYLLIS. Oh—you are a friend.

SLIM. *(Patting her shoulder)* Now, don't you worry. You leave everything to me. You and I'll fight this through to the finish.

PHYLLIS. How can I ever thank you?

(Feminine voices raised in argument heard off on stairway. Then MRS. CLARK, LUELLA and MRS. GREGORY appear on landing. MRS. CLARK is scanning a score card with a pleased air.)

SLIM. Come out on the veranda, Girlie, and we'll talk things over. (*He leads PHYLLIS to veranda door. They exit as the three women start to descend the stairs.*)

LUELLA. (*Coming down*) Isn't the Deacon simply gorgeous! (*She lands down L.C.*)

MRS. CLARK. He's very amusing. (*Crosses behind desk.*)

MRS. GREGORY. He's very *artful*. (*Angrily—crossing to LUELLA*) Luella, how many times am I to tell you a good bridge player never listens to an opponent's funny stories?

LUELLA. (*Standing L.C.*) Oh, mother, he's the most entertaining man I ever met.

MRS. GREGORY. We didn't come here for entertainment. (*MRS. CLARK, back of counter, puts money in drawer.*) I wouldn't mind so much if I'd lost to a good player. (*Takes out check book.*)

MRS. CLARK. I thought the Deacon played his cards very well for a beginner.

MRS. GREGORY. (*Crossing to desk*) Any fool could have played the cards *he* held! (*Pause.*) At that, he made several atrocious plays.

LUELLA. But they never seemed to interfere with his winning.

MRS. GREGORY. (*Bitterly, to MRS. CLARK*) I believe I owe you twenty-eight dollars more.

MRS. CLARK. Yes, but we can carry it over if you like.

MRS. GREGORY. No, indeed. I'm a woman who believes everyone should pay as they go. (*Writes check in her book with pen which MRS. CLARK hands her.*)

LUELLA. That's just what the Deacon said. (*MRS. GREGORY glares at her.*)

MRS. CLARK. Isn't it splendid. He is going to contribute his winnings to missionary funds! He

says you've saved over a hundred heathens tonight, my dear.

MRS. GREGORY. It appears to me rather unusual that a deacon of the church should choose bridge as a means of saving heathens.

LUELLA. The Deacon says he hopes you'll win it all back tomorrow night.

MRS. GREGORY. I intend to. (*Tearing check from book. To MRS. CLARK*) How long is the Deacon going to stay with you?

MRS. CLARK. Forever, I hope. (*MRS. GREGORY hands check to MRS. CLARK.*) Thank you, dear. (*LUELLA crosses behind post over to door L. as MRS. GREGORY starts L.*) Shall we say at nine tomorrow night, dear?

MRS. GREGORY. Very well.

MRS. CLARK. I'm sure you'll have better luck tomorrow.

MRS. GREGORY. I hope so. Good night. (*As she and LUELLA exit—starting in low, tense tones, which increase in loudness as she talks*) Luella, how many times must I tell you never to bid a no trump hand when you've got a major suit bid? You shouldn't—

(*She continues this speech ad lib. until she and LUELLA are out of sight. MRS. CLARK behind counter, singing very lightly to herself as she deposits the check in the drawer. THE DEACON appears in the landing.*)

DEACON. (*Descending the stairs—gently*) Have they gone?

MRS. CLARK. Yes, Deacon.

DEACON. (*Approaching desk*) Did Sister Gregory——? (*Pantomimes "Settle up."*)

MRS. CLARK. Yes. I have her check. (*She produces some bills and places them on the counter.*) Here's your half.

DEACON. (*Taking the money*) Thank you. I'm afraid Sister Gregory is a bit upset over our good fortune.

MRS. CLARK. Yes, she hates to lose. (*Plant this line well.*)

DEACON. (*To c., folding bills*) Well—"The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away." (*He places the money in his pocket—turns to her.*) You played a very consistent game tonight, Sister Clark.

MRS. CLARK. You were really responsible for our winning so heavily. I only played two or three of our hands during the entire evening.

DEACON. (*C.R.*) Ah, but you always had such excellent *helping* hands.

MRS. CLARK. Yes—didn't I? Unusually excellent for me. I only hope our good luck will carry over for tomorrow night.

DEACON. I trust for your sake that it may.

MRS. CLARK. (*Coming from behind counter*) I do hope you'll find your room comfortable, Deacon.

DEACON. (*Crosses up c.*) I'm sure I shall.

MRS. CLARK. You've had such a strenuous evening, I wonder if you wouldn't like to have your breakfast in bed in the morning?

DEACON. Now, my dear lady, that's very considerate of you, but being a lonely old bachelor I dislike eating in solitude.

MRS. CLARK. Then perhaps you'd like to breakfast with Willie and me?

DEACON. I'd be delighted.

MRS. CLARK. It's mutual, I assure you. Shall we say at nine-thirty? The others will have finished by then.

DEACON. I shall be there at nine-thirty.

MRS. CLARK. I'll try to have something a little special. (*DEACON exclaims "Aha!" MRS. CLARK goes up to stairs. Calls off the veranda door*) Miss Halliday!

(*There is a pause, and PHYLLIS enters. Obviously she has been considerably cheered by her recent talk with SLIM. On meeting the DEACON, she halts in apprehension, but is relieved when he appears not to recognize her, but walks over to chair near downstage window, and seats himself after picking up newspaper from desk between windows.*)

PHYLLIS. (*Crosses to stairs*) Yes, Mrs. Clark.

MRS. CLARK. Phyllis, I'm going to bed. I wish you'd wait here about half an hour and then lock up.

PHYLLIS. Very well.

MRS. CLARK. (*Mounting stairs*) I'm sorry to impose upon you so, but the new clerk should be here tomorrow. Good night, dear. (*She pauses at top of stairs*) Good night, Deacon.

DEACON. (*Rises*) Good night, Sister, and pleasant dreams. (*He resumes seat and paper.* MRS. CLARK *exits up the stairs as SLIM enters from veranda.*)

SLIM. (*Crossing stage—up the stairs*) I'm going upstairs for a minute, Girlie. I'll see you later.

PHYLLIS. Yes, Mr. Sullivan—and thank you so much.

SLIM. Don't mention it.

(*SLIM exits up the stairs. PHYLLIS stands with back to audience. She hesitates a moment, then comes down to the DEACON to L.*)

PHYLLIS. (*Gratefully*) It was awfully kind of you not to recognize me. (*DEACON glances up from paper.*) You won't tell them where you met us, will you?

DEACON. My dear young lady, you must be mistaken—we've never met before.

PHYLLIS. Why—(*Back a step*)—I—that night—in the car——

DEACON. I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about. You've evidently mistaken me for some one else.

(*THE DEACON returns to his paper, with an air of dismissing the conversation. PHYLLIS regards him with nervous indecision for a moment, then goes toward the counter, as WILLIE enters cautiously from the veranda—addresses DOROTHY in a loud whisper.*)

WILLIE. Miss Halliday—where's Ma? (*Comes down to L.C.*)

PHYLLIS. She's gone to bed, Willie.

WILLIE. Gee, she'll be sore if she finds out that I sneaked out the back door, but I just had to see that fight, and Mr. Adams was doin' fine, too. Why, Bull Moran got all tired out *knockin' him down*.

PHYLLIS. Hadn't you better go to bed now, Willie?

WILLIE. (*Crossing to stairs*) I better give Ma a chance t' get t' sleep first. I'll go up and take a look, but if she ain't snoring ya don't catch me takin' a chance sneaking past 'er. (*Starts up the stairs.*)

PHYLLIS. Willie.

WILLIE. Yes, Miss Halliday.

PHYLLIS. Please don't say anything to your mother about Mr. Adams. I want to tell her myself, in the morning.

WILLIE. Sure, Miss Halliday, I won't say a word.

(*He disappears along the landing. PHYLLIS glances worriedly toward the DEACON, who is apparently engrossed in his paper. DEACON coughs slightly to discourage conversation. Then she exits abruptly to the dining room, closing the doors*

behind her. THE DEACON lowers his paper, turns slowly and looks after PHYLLIS with an enigmatic expression on his face. Then rises, closes veranda doors, comes down to C., produces small flask, takes a drink. Takes a clove from his vest pocket and puts it in his mouth. At this point SLIM and BULL are heard arguing off R. on the stairway landing. THE DEACON hears this, and immediately produces his roll of money and drops a few bills on the floor intentionally. As SLIM and BULL make their entrance he is bending over, picking up these bills. They come down the stairs.)

BULL. Aw, come on—slip me another fifty.

SLIM. Not a chance. You got enough to ride you through in this burg for one evening.

BULL. I know, but I've got a date and—— (*Sees DEACON picking up bills.*) Pipe—pipe——

DEACON. (*Hazing dropped a bill on the floor, picks it up and, rising, joins SLIM and BULL.*) Pardon me. Could either of you gentlemen oblige me with a fifty dollar bill for some smaller ones?

SLIM. Sure. Here you are. (*He produces his roll and exchanges a bill for several of the DEACON'S.*)

DEACON. Thank you, sir. I always dislike carrying a large wad of bills.

BULL. Gee—— Lookit the—— (*SLIM silences him.*)

DEACON. I find that checks are generally regarded with suspicion—so I always make it a point to be well provided with cash. (*Crosses L. to let this register.*)

SLIM. That's a good idea. (*Exchanges wise look with BULL.*)

DEACON. I believe you gentlemen were pointed out to me as participants in the boxing exhibition this evening.

BULL. Dat's right—I'm Bull Moran—(*Crosses and shakes hands*)—And dis is Slim Sullivan—me manager.

DEACON. (*Crossing and shaking hands with SLIM*) I am delighted to meet you. I am Deacon Caswell. (*DEACON between BULL and SLIM.*)

BULL. (*Salutes*) How de, Deak?

DEACON. (*Bows*) I might say that I'm an ardent admirer of the manly art of self-defense.

SLIM. (*Kidding him*) Ever do any boxing?

DEACON. Not in recent years—but previous to my conversion to the faith I was addicted to the use of stimulants and in consequence was very pugnacious at times, I believe.

BULL. You don't say?

DEACON. I do indeed. You see, gentlemen, before seeing the light, I was considered to be a most disreputable character, due mainly, I dare say, to my weakness for *gambling*.

BULL. Crapps?

DEACON. Poker. (*SLIM walks down R. Produces cards with "Here's a sucker" air.*) And being a poor player, it all but ruined me financially.

BULL. So you cut it out, eh?

DEACON. Oh, yes. Yes, indeed.

SLIM. (*Giving BULL the wink*) Funny you should mention poker——

DEACON. Eh?

SLIM. Mr. Moran and I were just talking about killing a few hours with a little game of freeze-out.

DEACON. Really? I wonder if there would be any objection, gentlemen, if I—looked on?

SLIM. Not at all, sir.

BULL. Glad t' have ya, Deak.

DEACON. You're very kind.

SLIM. (*Giving BULL the wink*) Bring that table down here, Mr. Moran.

BULL. Sure thing, Mr. Sullivan. (*Goes up to c.*

table and removes table cover and books, putting them on round seat.)

DEACON. Dear me, gentlemen, you're not doing this merely to oblige me, are you?

SLIM. Oh, no.

(BULL, coming down with table to L. of DEACON, accidentally bumps into the DEACON'S back. THE DEACON turns and smiles. General ad lib.)

BULL. Excuse me—my fault—my fault.

(DEACON says, "No, it's my fault." BULL places table a little L.C. on a line between the downstage side of the hotel desk, which is R. of the downstage window, which is L. SLIM brings the chair which was R. of the table C. down to the same position where the table is now located. BULL brings over the chair which was in front of the downstage window and places it L. of the table.)

SLIM. Draw up a chair, Deacon.

DEACON. If you don't mind, gentlemen, I think I'll stand. *(As BULL brings chair from down L.)* I'd be afraid to trust myself in a chair.

BULL. All right. *(Sits in chair L. of table.)* Deal 'em out, Mr. Sullivan.

WILLIE. *(Entering from stairway, coming down to R. of SLIM)* Whatcha doin'?

SLIM. Hey, you're just the man we're lookin' for. Here, take this half dollar and stick out there on the veranda. If you see anyone comin', slip us the news quick. *(Gives WILLIE half dollar.)*

WILLIE. Sure I will. *(Exits to veranda.)*

BULL. Aw, there ain't much chance anyone'll be blowin' in here this late.

(DEACON stands behind table, looking on.)

SLIM. Dollar limit, Mr. Moran?

BULL. Sure, anything you say, Mr. Sullivan.

(BULL and SLIM put money on table. SLIM deals the hands. BULL takes up his hand. THE DEACON cranes his neck eagerly to look at it. SLIM takes up his hand, then coughs slightly to attract BULL's attention, then looks squarely at BULL.)

SLIM. By the way, Mr. Moran, did you mail my letter to Mr. Anderson?

BULL. (*Not getting his drift*) Huh? (SLIM kicks him under the table; then, *comprehending*) Oh, gee, I clean forgot all about it.

SLIM. I want that to get away on the early morning train. There's a mail box right down on the corner. Would you mind dropping it in for me right away?

BULL. (*Getting up*) Not at all.

SLIM. The Deacon'll play your hand.

DEACON. No, no, please. Please, Brother Bull, I——

BULL. Sure, play it for me, Deak, I got a hunch you'll bring me luck.

(*Spoken together.*)

(*During above speeches, SLIM ad libs. with them, insisting that the DEACON sit down and play BULL's hand. BULL exits.*)

SLIM. (*As the DEACON still appears reluctant to accept BULL's recent invitation*) Go ahead, Deacon, play it for him. Come on.

DEACON. (*After pause*) Well——

(*Obviously unable to resist the temptation further, he sits, makes an eager grab, tremblingly takes*

up BULL's hand and scans the cards. He holds cards awkwardly, drops one to floor, picks it up—appears flustered.)

SLIM. Can you open, Deacon?

DEACON. Open? Yes, that is the term. Isn't it? I regret to say I cannot.

SLIM. Well, I'll bust it for half a dollar. *(He antes the coin.)*

DEACON. *(Nervously scanning the cards)* I wonder if your friend would wish me to play on these. *(Impulsively)* I will. *(He extracts a coin from BULL's change and contributes it to the pot.)*

SLIM. How many, Deacon?

DEACON. Eh? You may let me have four, please.

SLIM. *(Deals him four cards)* And I'll take three. *(He deals to himself and takes up his hand.)* Well, this ought to be worth half a buck, anyway. *(He antes another coin.)*

DEACON. Now, let me see—— *(Trembling with excitement.)* You drew three cards—I shall have to raise you another half a buck. *(He adds two coins to the pot. BULL re-enters.)*

SLIM. *(Adding coin to pot)* Come again. *(BULL takes up a position above table and watches the play.)*

DEACON. *(Adding another coin to the pot)* Dear me. Perhaps I'd better call you.

SLIM. *(Laying down his hand)* I managed to better, Deacon. Kings up.

DEACON. How very provoking—I have only a pair of Queens.

BULL. What the hell did ye raise him fer?

DEACON. I thought he might be—a—a—bluffing.

SLIM. I opened the pot, you know—I opened it.

BULL. Sure. He opened it. *(Laughs and goes up and brings down chair which was L. of table before*

table was moved, and places it above the table during the following conversation:)

DEACON. So you did—so you did—I'd entirely forgotten it. I must insist, Mr. Moran, on making good your losses.

BULL. (*With finality*) Nuthin' doin', Deak.

DEACON. You see, gentlemen, it's so long since I actually indulged in a game of cards, I daresay I lost my head for the moment.

BULL. (*Jovially*) Sure—we all pull "boners."

DEACON. I suppose you're waiting for your chair, Mr. Moran. (*He starts to rise.*)

BULL. No, that's all right—sit still, Deak.

DEACON. I insist—I insist. Now, Brother Bull, Brother Bull.

BULL. Well, all right. (*Sits chair L. of table. DEACON stands above table*) My deal, ain't it? (*He takes up cards and starts to shuffle.*)

SLIM. Why don't you come in for a few hands, Deacon? Let's make it three-handed. (*DEACON protests.*)

BULL. Sure, come on, Deak. It's no fun just lookin' on. (*They continue ad lib., urging him to play—he protesting.*)

DEACON. (*After a pause*) Well—I will. (*Sits quickly. SLIM and BULL say: "Atta boy! Fine! Good!"*) But only on condition, gentlemen, that you never breathe a word to a soul. It would ruin me.

SLIM and BULL. (*In unison*) Sure.

BULL. What we playin' fer?

SLIM. We'll leave that to the Deacon.

DEACON. I fear I'm interfering with your pleasure, gentlemen.

SLIM. Not at all. You'll be *addin'* to our pleasure. Won't he, Mr. Moran?

BULL. You said it, Mr. Sullivan.

SLIM. Well, suppose we open for a half a dollar with a dollar limit; how is that, Deacon?

DEACON. Anything you say, gentlemen.

(SLIM starts to cut cards. THE DEACON nervously produces his roll and places it on the table. SLIM and BULL each have their money on the table, which consists of several bills each and also some change. WILLIE dashes excitedly in from veranda.)

WILLIE. Somebody's comin'! (He darts behind counter, and hides. They all rise hastily.)

BULL. Aw, heil!

DEACON. Dear me, dear me.

SLIM. Who can it be?

} (Spoken
together.)

WILLIE. (Popping up from behind the counter) It's the Sheriff. (He ducks down behind the counter.)

BULL. Gimme them cards.

(He starts with clumsy haste to gather up the scattered deck of cards and manages to secrete them. Each man is standing with several bills folded lengthwise—BULL's bills held in his right hand, SLIM's in his left—the DEACON's in his left, as ED KING appears in the veranda door.)

DEACON. (Piously) And, now, brethren, let us bow in prayer. (He bows his head. SLIM is quick to imitate him and BULL looks at SLIM, who is trying to make him understand by nodding his head a couple of times; BULL then bows his head. THE DEACON speaks fervently in ministerial tones. KING stands in surprise, watching them.) And we offer our thanks for this liberal contribution which these two erring children have so generously given to help spread the light among the indigent heathens of darkest Africa.

BULL. (After slight pause) Amen!



"ALIAS THE DEACON"

(THE DEACON takes the bills from SLIM's hand, who stares at him, not comprehending for a moment, then takes them from BULL's hand, and walks towards the Sheriff. BULL protesting to SLIM in dumb show and SLIM trying to quiet him without saying a word.)

DEACON. (Cordially to KING) How do you do, sir?

KING. Pardon me—I didn't mean to butt in on a prayer meeting.

DEACON. That's all right, sir. (Crosses down L.)

KING. (Crosses down to L. of BULL) I was on my way home and just dropped in to tell you gentlemen that you'll have to appear as witnesses at Adams' hearing in the morning.

SLIM. How's Cunningham coming along?

KING. He's come to, but he's kinda shaky yet. Did I understand you to say that Adams was alone in the office with Cunningham when you got there with the crowd?

SLIM. That's right.

KING. Well, Cunningham claims that his wallet and four hundred dollars is missing. Looks pretty bad for young Adams. Guess I'll go over to the jail now and have another talk with him. (Politely, as he crosses to DEACON, who is counting money) Sorry to have interrupted you, sir.

DEACON. (Crosses to back of table) Not at all, sir.

KING. Good night, gentlemen. (He exits quickly via the veranda.)

SLIM. Good night, Sheriff.

BULL. Good night. (Crosses up and closes veranda door and crosses down to L. of table.)

SLIM. (Convulsed with mirth) Gee, but that was nifty. (Resumes seat at table.)

(WILLIE appears from behind counter.)

DEACON. (*Appears flustered*) I dislike practicing deception, but I felt something had to be done. (*Gives SLIM and BULL back their money. Places it on table.*)

BULL. And you done it. I couldn't have did it better meself. (*Resumes his seat—produces cards.*)

DEACON. Now, brothers, I feel so upset and distressed I don't think I shall play any longer. (*He turns to go; they grab him by coat.*)

SLIM and BULL. Oh—oh, why not? Come on, sit down (*Etc.*)

DEACON. Do you think it would be all right?

BULL and SLIM. Sure, sure. Certainly. (*Etc.*)

(DEACON sits again, SLIM R. of the table, and the DEACON above it, BULL L. of it. SLIM takes up cards. PHYLLIS enters abruptly from dining room, carrying a small package wrapped in a napkin.)

(*WARN Curtain.*)

PHYLLIS. Willie, where's the jail?

(BULL and SLIM jump nervously and grab their money, which has again been placed on table. THE DEACON makes a slight start and looks warily out of the corner of his eye.)

WILLIE. (*After a pause*) About a quarter of a mile from here.

PHYLLIS. (*Starting for veranda door*) I suppose I can inquire the way.

WILLIE. (*Crossing L.*) I'll go with you, Miss Haliday. Lemme carry that bundle for you.

PHYLLIS. Thank you, Willie.

(*She exits quickly to veranda, closely attended by WILLIE.*)

SLIM. Mr. Moran, lock that door. (MORAN goes up and locks door. SLIM rubs his hands together, gleefully.) Now I guess we can have a nice quiet little game. (DEACON nods cordially.)

BULL. (Producing the cards and placing them on table) Sure. Now we'll start with half a dollar to open, and a dollar limit, eh? (Everybody smiles and assents.) Everybody ante. (All ante. SLIM starts to deal.)

DEACON. Pardon me, gentlemen, but don't you think it would be more brotherly if we cut for deal?

SLIM and BULL. Sure—of course. (They cut for deal, BULL first, SLIM next, the DEACON last. He holds up card—acts surprised.)

DEACON. Dear me, I win the deal, don't I?

(SLIM and BULL laughingly ad lib., "What do you know about that?" "Right away he wins the deal," etc., etc. SLIM and BULL both look at each other, showing that they think the DEACON will be easy money for them. THE DEACON puts on spectacles and eyes SLIM and BULL laughingly as he shuffles the cards. General joviality. The DEACON starts awkwardly to deal the cards, as—)

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT II

SCENE: *The combination parlor and library (adjoining the room occupied by the DEACON) at the "Commercial House." The entrance is at c. back, double doors, and beyond which is revealed a public hallway. A door down L. opens into the DEACON'S room. The furnishings are substantial and old-fashioned. A two-section bookcase at back. Library table L. Settee up against R. wall. Several framed pictures on walls, etc.*

AT RISE: WILLIE is discovered seated at library table shuffling a deck of cards. He deals out three hands of poker, to himself and two imaginary opponents. He then puts down the deck, takes up his own hand, examines it, then addresses the imaginary opponent to his right.

WILLIE. Well, can you open it. Brother Slim? *(He rises and examines the hand)* Naw, you better pass. *(Addressing the second player)* Well, it's up to you, Brother Bull. *(He goes around the table and picks up the imaginary "Brother Bull's" hand; then speaks in imitation of the original "Bull")* I'll smash it fer two berries. *(He resumes his own position, takes up his hand, assumes a dignified pose and the DEACON'S tone)* I'm afraid, Brother Bull, I shall have to raise you five dollars. *(Takes up the pack)* You desire three cards? Very well, brother. *(He deals "Bull" three cards, then speaks as though in answer to a question by "Bull")* Now let me see. *(Looking at his own cards)* I think I'd better play

these. (*After a pause, sympathetically*) What, you didn't better? How unfortunate! (*Raking in the imaginary "pot" with a benevolent smile*) Well, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away."

(MRS. CLARK *appears in the doorway c.*)

MRS. CLARK. Willie Clark! What *are* you doing?

WILLIE. Just practicin'.

MRS. CLARK. Didn't I tell you to mind the office while Miss Halliday went over to the jail?

WILLIE. Aw, they won't nobody come in.

MRS. CLARK. You go right down and get behind that desk. (*As WILLIE says, "Aw, gee," and reluctantly retires*) Well, if it isn't my best deck of cards. (*She hastily gathers up the cards and places them on table as MRS. PIKE, MRS. GREGORY and LUELLA, Committee for the local Welfare League, enter door c.*)

MRS. GREGORY. (*Coming down*) Oh, Mrs. Clark, here you are! Where is the dear Deacon?

MRS. CLARK. (*Glancing towards door lower l.*) Why, I believe he's in his room.

MRS. GREGORY. (*Stepping down*) We are here, Mrs. Clark, to request the Deacon——

MRS. PIKE. (*With an authoritative gesture*) As Chairman, I'll speak for the Committee. We are here, Mrs. Clark, as a Committee appointed by the Welfare League, to solicit the support of dear Deacon Caswell in opposition to Sunday baseball.

MRS. GREGORY. Personally I fail to see how the Deacon, being an utter stranger here, can lend any material support to the problem at hand.

LUELLA. Where is he? I'm just dying to hear another one of his funny stories. (*Down r.*)

MRS. PIKE. I'm sure, ladies, that the support of a man of Deacon Caswell's importance will add great strength to our cause.

LUELLA. May we see him, please, Mrs. Clark?

MRS. CLARK. Don't you think tomorrow morning would be better? It's almost supper time.

MRS. PIKE. That doesn't matter. We've all decided to have supper here tonight.

MRS. CLARK. Very well, I'll call the Deacon. (*While she is crossing to door L. the ladies take seats, amidst general ad lib. MRS. CLARK raps on the door of the DEACON'S room.*)

DEACON. (*Off stage L.*) Yes. (*Opens door and stands just inside doorway.*)

MRS. CLARK. I'm so sorry to disturb you, Deacon, but these ladies are a Committee appointed by our Welfare League.

DEACON. (*Bows*) How do you do, Sisters? (*Ad lib. of greeting from the Committee. MRS. GREGORY says, "I think we've already met."*)

MRS. CLARK. The Committee are having supper here tonight, and before they go down to the dining-room they wish to solicit your support in our campaign against Sunday baseball.

MRS. PIKE. Yes, Deacon, we simply *must* have your co-operation.

DEACON. Really, Sisters, I—I am hardly prepared—— (*MRS. CLARK sits R.C.*)

MRS. PIKE. Of course we realize, Deacon, that you must be bitterly opposed to Sunday baseball.

MRS. GREGORY. With its attendant gambling!

MRS. PIKE. Dear Deacon, do let us hear your views on the subject.

DEACON. Really, Sisters, I should hate to refuse to lift my voice in such a worthy cause, but——

LUELLA. Just a few words, Deacon—please. (*General ad lib. from the other ladies, urging the DEACON to express his views on the subject.*)

DEACON. Well—— (*An outburst of applause from the ladies. DEACON goes to behind table, faces them.*) My dear Sisters, I feel extremely honored

at being called upon to address your charming Committee. As I have been requested to use for my theme, "Shall our Sundays be desecrated by baseball and its attendant gambling"—(*He unconsciously picks up the deck of cards—drops them quickly*)—I shall do so. Er—that is—now, there are a great many things that may be said on this subject. The question is—er—what are they? At this point let me pause—er—to state that I, personally, am most emphatically opposed to Sunday baseball. (*Much applause from the ladies.*) Although I confess that as a boy my views on the subject were quite different, as I pitched regularly on the Sabbath for the "Centerville Midgets." (*Much laughter and general ad lib. from the ladies.*)

LUELLA. Oh, Deacon, you're a perfect scream.

DEACON. I am glad to see, Sisters, that you have brought your sense of humor with you, even in the face of the dilemma which now disturbs your flourishing little metropolis. As I have just said and now repeat, this dilemma—this dilemma—— (*His hand goes to his hip pocket for his flask, and then he immediately realizes his mistake and pours himself a glass of water which he gulps down*)—is obvious to us all. (*More laughter greets this sally. DEACON comes around to front of table*) And now, my dear Sisters,—(*The ladies all lean forward expectantly*) In conclusion, permit me to assure you that in any steps you may take towards abolishing Sunday baseball you have my heartiest sympathy and co-operation. (*Hearty applause from the ladies.*) And now I shan't detain you any longer, ladies, as I believe a delicious repast awaits you one and all in the dining-room. I thank you. (*The ladies all chatter and crowd about the DEACON, taking his hand, and ad libing their approval.*)

LUELLA. Oh, Deacon, you're simply delightful—(*The ladies all ad lib. and exit through hallway to*

the left, and as the chatter dies away MRS. CLARK speaks to DEACON, who is about to sneak back to his room.)

MRS. CLARK. Oh, Deacon, your speech was beautifully thought out.

DEACON. Ah, ah, Sister Clark—flattery has cost many a King his throne.

MRS. CLARK. Deacon, you are never at a loss what to say.

DEACON. I'm afraid I was distinctly at a loss only a moment ago. *(Points to behind table.)*

MRS. CLARK. Well, Deacon, if you were a King and could hear the wonderful things those ladies are saying about you in the dining-room, I'm sure you would lose *your* throne.

DEACON. If I were a King, I would appoint you my eternal hostess—everything about this little place reflects your charm.

MRS. CLARK. I'm so glad you think it charming, but it's an awful lot of responsibility. Won't you join just for a bite?

DEACON. Thank you, no. I really have no desire for food. *(Gives a suspicious gesture in direction of his hip pocket and exits L. into his room.)*

(MRS. CLARK crosses up R. and picks up her bag, which she has left on a chair near the bookcase, when SLIM SULLIVAN enters, followed by BULL.)

SLIM. (L.C.) I'm looking for something to read, Mrs. Clark—do you mind if I take a book to my room? *(BULL stands in doorway.)*

MRS. CLARK. I'm afraid you'll find my library rather limited, but take any books you like.

SLIM. Thanks!

MRS. CLARK. Everybody helps themselves. *(Exits C. to L.)*

BULL. (*Coming down L.C. as SLIM goes to bookcase*) Sure. Dat's why dere limited. (*BULL sits on corner of table.*)

SLIM. (*Looking through books and bookcase*) "Limited" is right—"East Lynne"—"Swiss Family Robertson"— (*Takes out book.*)

BULL. Say, you better look fer a book dat'll wise you up on *poker*. By de way—how long are we goin' to stick in this burg?

SLIM. Oh—a few days. (*Coming down and sitting in chair at R.C.*) We might as well put in a little training here for the Casey fight.

BULL. On what?—The Deak's cleaned us, ain't he?

SLIM. Not quite.

BULL. Oh, he ain't! Well—— (*Crosses to SLIM, palm extended*) Come! Come!

SLIM. Here's a ten spot and see that you stretch it.

BULL. (*Stretching bill*) The Gov'ment ain't never made dese outer *rubber* yet. (*Crossing to L.*) Say—is dis all we got left?

SLIM. I've wired to Chicago for some more.

BULL. Well, when it comes, take a tip from me, *don't wise the Deak!* If dat guy knows his Bible like he knows *poker*—— (*Throws up hands and drops in chair R. of table.*)

SLIM. (*Thoughtfully*) Say, he sure held some weird hands last night!

BULL. And—oh, baby—didn't he know how to play 'em! Dat guy done more raisin' than a barrel of yeast. (*Searching through magazines on table; picks up one and reads*) "The Ladies' Home Journal"—why don't dese dumps take on the "Police Gazette" for a change? (*BULL is sitting R. of table, reading, and SLIM is sitting in chair down R., reading his book, when the DEACON enters quickly and stands regarding them benevolently.*)

DEACON. (*After a pause*) Ah, brothers! (SLIM gives a startled look, and BULL jumps up, takes the bill which SLIM has given him from his left vest pocket and puts it into his right pants pocket, then sits again, and regards DEACON suspiciously) I see you're seeking a little literary diversion. I'm glad you're here—I've been looking for you.

SLIM. (*Suspiciously*) What's on your mind?

BULL. (*Rising*) If it's what I t'ink it is, *nothing doing*. (*Crossing back of his chair; warily watches DEACON.*)

DEACON. (*Crossing to c.*) The fact is, gentlemen—that since our sinful indulgence of last evening, my conscience has been troubling me.

BULL. I ain't been feelin' so good myself.

SLIM. I don't get you, Deacon.

DEACON. I feel, gentlemen, that fate dealt rather unkindly with you both last night. While my good fortune was what might be termed "Sinner's Luck."

BULL. (*Hopefully, crossing down L.C.*) And a good sinner always repents, eh?

SLIM. I get yer—bein' a church member, you feel it would be a Christian act to hand us back our dough?

DEACON. (*Between SLIM and BULL*) Exactly, gentlemen.

BULL. Atta boy, Deak! (*Slaps DEACON's back approvingly and holds out hand for money.*)

SLIM. It's mighty decent of you, Deacon. (*Rises. Extends open palm.*)

DEACON. (*Producing large roll*) This money weighs very heavily upon my conscience and I am extremely hopeful that you will retrieve every penny of it, if you are now ready to continue our little sitting. (BULL and SLIM turn away. SLIM sits.) Am I to gather, brothers, that you are not in the mood?

BULL. Yes; and that's all ye're goin' to gather. (*He goes up to L. of table.*)

SLIM. (*Seated in chair R.*) To tell yer the truth, Deacon, I got an awful headache right now.

DEACON. I'm so sorry that you're indisposed—but another time, perhaps, another time. (*Crossing to door L.—gently*) Good evening, brothers. (*Exits L.*)

BULL. Gee, dat guy has give *me* a headache.

SLIM. Aw, go to bed!

BULL. All right. But—say—I need a *chaperone*. (*A step toward SLIM—looks around*) Where's dat bottle of Scotch you mentioned?

SLIM. It's in the black bag in my room—here's the key. (*BULL starts up.*) Take a drink, and put it back.

BULL. (*Turning*) The drink?

SLIM. The *bottle*—back in the satchel—and hey—(*As BULL starts to go*) I moved outer eighteen—I'm in twenty-four now.

BULL. (*Looking at key—coming down to L. of SLIM*) What's de idea—changing your room?

SLIM. The other one was too noisy.

BULL. I s'pose it's gonna be quieter in twenty-four, eh? Right alongside of that classy little waitress. What yer tryin' to do—get that little Jane to Chi—and put her to work for you in that Honkey-Tonk Cabaret?

SLIM. (*Rises*) Hey—you keep yer nose outer my business! Go to bed and go easy on dat Scotch. Remember you're booked for a five mile run in the morning—

BULL. I'll be here—I'll be dere—with de empty bottle. (*He is about to exit when CUNNINGHAM enters abruptly from hallway; he has a strip of adhesive tape over his right eye and his eye is a bit discolored.*)

SLIM. Hello, Cunningham! How do you feel?

CUNNINGHAM. I'm all right—where's this Deacon's room?

SLIM. (*Points to door L.*) Dat's it. (CUNNINGHAM crosses to door L. and knocks. SLIM crosses up to BULL) Hey, Moran, go easy on dat stuff—I want a drink of it myself before I go to bed tonight. (BULL exits c. to r. and SLIM exits c. to l.)

DEACON. (*Entering L.*) You wish to see me, sir?

CUNNINGHAM. (*Who has crossed R. after knocking on door*) I've got a few things to say to you.

DEACON. Won't you step into my room?

CUNNINGHAM. Right here'll do.

DEACON. As you wish. Shall we sit down? (*Sits R. of table.*)

CUNNINGHAM. (*Aggressively*) I understand you stood in this room a little while ago before a crowd of female busybodies and advocated the closing down of Sunday baseball in this town.

DEACON. Exactly. And I gather from your attitude that you have come to congratulate me.

CUNNINGHAM. *Liuh!* I'm Jim Cunningham!

DEACON. I never would have guessed it.

CUNNINGHAM. Don't try to be funny with me. I'm the sole owner of our local baseball club, besides being the principal stockholder in several of our most flourishing enterprises.

DEACON. Ah! Now you interest me. (*Hitches his chair nearer CUNNINGHAM.*)

CUNNINGHAM. I've helped to make this town and I don't intend to allow any meddling outsiders to interfere with its progress. Sunday baseball affords the hard-working citizens of this town their only real chance for recreation.

DEACON. As it's more popular than churchgoing, nowadays, I daresay you're right.

CUNNINGHAM. (*Turns away R.*) I'm not a church member and never expect to be, but at least I'm not a hypocrite.

DEACON. I must confess, Brother Cunningham, that you have an honest face.

CUNNINGHAM. I'm not looking for compliments. What I want to find out is where you get off pulling this reform stuff—(*Raising his voice*)—when only last night you sat in at a *poker* game, downstairs!

DEACON. (*Rises; counterfeiting alarm*) Please, Brother Cunningham, not so loud.

CUNNINGHAM. Ah, that kind of takes the wind out of your sails.

DEACON. I assure you, Brother Cunningham, I was drawn into the game against my will. You see, Brother Bull had to mail a letter—and, well, I confess, I have a weakness for poker—

CUNNINGHAM. Do you realize that I could have you driven out of town—put in jail?

DEACON. (*Feigning alarm*) I do, Brother Cunningham, I do—but I am sure you are far too generous to go to that extreme.

CUNNINGHAM. That all depends—*now*, how do you stand on Sunday baseball?

DEACON. I'm heartily in favor of it.

CUNNINGHAM. Backing out like a crab, eh? Just as I figured you would!

DEACON. Well, Brother Cunningham—had I known that *you* were the local baseball magnate, I would never have lent my voice to the protest.

CUNNINGHAM. Then you will retract what you said to those women?

DEACON. Gladly.

CUNNINGHAM. Issue a signed statement to that effect?

DEACON. I'll do so at once.

CUNNINGHAM. (*Menacingly*) See that you do.

(*Crosses up and exits to C. of L. DEACON watches him off, crosses up to C., then back to door L., and just before he exits L. he reaches his hand around the hip pocket as if he were going to take a drink from flask. After he exits MRS.*

CLARK enters C. from L. with a bowl of flowers which she places on table L. She then crosses R. as if she were going to straighten chairs, when PHYLLIS enters along the hallway from L. as if she were going to her room. She has her hat on, and pauses in doorway when she sees MRS. CLARK.)

PHYLLIS. (*Enters*) Mrs. Clark!

MRS. CLARK. (*Down R.*) Phyllis, did they let you see Mr. Adams?

PHYLLIS. (*Very much depressed—places hat on chair R. of door*) Yes—oh, it was terrible to see poor John locked up in that dreary little cell. (*Turns down L.*)

MRS. CLARK. I understand how you must feel, dear.

PHYLLIS. Oh, Mrs. Clark—now they accuse John of taking Mr. Cunningham's wallet and \$400.

MRS. CLARK. I know, dear. When is the trial set for?

PHYLLIS. Not for another month. He'll have to stay there in that awful cell. Oh, if I could raise the money for his bail! But it's a thousand dollars—and I'm the only friend he has in the world.

MRS. CLARK. I do hope he's worthy of you, dear.

PHYLLIS. I love him, Mrs. Clark, and I'll do anything—anything to save him.

MRS. CLARK. You're a very brave little girl. (*Takes PHYLLIS in her arms.*) I've grown awfully fond of you, Phyllis—and I want you to know that no matter what happens, you're welcome to remain here as long as you like.

PHYLLIS. I'm awfully grateful to you, but I've just got to find some way to help him. I don't know what to do. If I only had someone to advise me. (*She is now in front of table L.*)

MRS. CLARK. Oh, you poor, dear child—I wish

I—— (*Getting an idea. She crosses to the door of the DEACON'S room, knocks on same; a pause, then DEACON appears in the doorway.*) Oh, Deacon! I'm sorry to disturb you again, but I must ask another favor of you—I want you to meet Miss Halliday, Deacon—Phyllis, this is Deacon Caswell.

DEACON. (*Crosses to PHYLLIS*) How do you do, my dear young lady. (*Extends his hand; PHYLLIS hesitates, then takes it.*)

PHYLLIS. Why—how do you do?

MRS. CLARK. Miss Halliday is in trouble; and I feel sure that you are much more competent to advise her than I. (*She turns to PHYLLIS, and as DEACON crosses above table toward c. door*) Phyllis—I want you to tell the Deacon everything, and act upon his advice. (*She crosses up to c. doors.*) Thank you, Deacon. (*DEACON bows slightly, closing doors after her, then comes down to R. of PHYLLIS. Drops deacon tones.*)

DEACON. Well!

PHYLLIS. Why wouldn't you recognize me last night?

DEACON. Sometimes it's advisable not to remember, so I thought it best that we remain strangers.

PHYLLIS. But we're not strangers! We were all together in that boxcar—refugees, vagrants, all of us.

DEACON. Yes—one of us was a murderer—another a common thug—while I—well, I'd always managed to do very nicely without resorting to violence. But the fourth weed in our garden of degeneration, your friend Adams, has proved himself a clumsy, bungling crook.

PHYLLIS. But they have no proof that John took that money.

DEACON. Suppose they do prove it?

PHYLLIS. It wouldn't make any difference—I'd love him just the same.

DEACON. So you'd sacrifice yourself?

PHYLLIS. Even if he did take the money, he was doing it for me. He'd done everything for me. Why, he was working in a garage, washing cars—eating in a cheap lunch room, just so he could give me his little salary to keep for—for our home.

DEACON. Your home?

PHYLLIS. We were going to be married——

DEACON. Oh!

PHYLLIS. And last night they promised him two hundred dollars. He went in that ring and fought—for our home—for me, and then they wouldn't pay him!

DEACON. So he helped himself?

PHYLLIS. They have no proof. (*Turning on him*) What right have *you* to condemn him!

DEACON. None, except that I once knew a little girl—a girl very much like you—who sacrificed herself trying to lead the black sheep back to the fold.

PHYLLIS. But I know my love can save him.

DEACON. Then you're going to stick in the garden with your weed?

PHYLLIS. Yes, I'm going to stick. I'm going to fight and hope and pray, and if I can't save him, I'll be a weed, too.

(*She sinks into chair, R. of table, buries her face in her hands, then sobs softly. DEACON stands regarding her thoughtfully for a moment.*)

WILLIE. Miss Halliday! (*Off c. to L. Entering. Crosses down R. C.*) Miss Halliday—oh, excuse me—I didn't know you——

DEACON. Willie, your mother is——

WILLIE. She's down the office—want me to get her?

DEACON. (*Going up*) No, thank you; I'll find

her. (*Turns—regards PHYLLIS thoughtfully.*) I'll see her myself. (*Exits C. to L.*)

WILLIE. (*Sees PHYLLIS has been crying. Crosses to her*) What's the matter, Miss Halliday?

PHYLLIS. (*Tries to hide tears*) Willie, I thought you were in bed?

WILLIE. I'm supposed to be; but I know you've been feeling bad about Mr. Adams and—here's a box of chocolates for you. (*Hands it to her.*)

PHYLLIS. Oh, Willie, you shouldn't have done that! (*Rises.*)

WILLIE. Sure I should. I knew you didn't eat any dinner. And *they're* filled with everything. .

PHYLLIS. You're a dear boy.

WILLIE. Say, listen, Miss Halliday, they ain't nothin' I wouldn't do for you—they ain't nothin'.

PHYLLIS. You darling! (*She kisses her youthful admirer.*)

WILLIE. (*Slightly embarrassed—backs away*) Gee!—thanks. (*He starts to back out of room.*) Well—I—I better be goin' now. I hope you like the chocolates.

PHYLLIS. I'm sure I shall, dear.

WILLIE. Sure you will. (*He returns impulsively to PHYLLIS.*) An' don't you worry, Miss Halliday—'bout Mister Adams, I mean. We'll get him out a' jail all right. We *gotta* get him out—so's he can pitch for us Sat'day!

(*He favors PHYLLIS with a reassuring juvenile smile, and again starts to back out of the room, which lands him in the arms of MRS. CLARK, who enters at that moment.*)

MRS. CLARK. Willie Clark! I thought I told you to go to bed.

WILLIE. Aw, gee, Ma—I musta forgot it.

MRS. CLARK. Well, as long as you're up, you may

as well go down and take charge of the desk until my guests leave. (*Crosses down to PHYLLIS. WIL-LIE says: "All right, Ma!" and exits.*) It's really too bad, dear, but the Sheriff is here. He wants to see you.

PHYLLIS. (*Crosses up*) I—I'll come right down.

MRS. CLARK. (*Crosses up c.*) That won't be necessary, dear. I thought the office would be too public, so I told Ed King I'd arrange for him to see you here. Shall I send him up?

PHYLLIS. Yes, thank you.

(*MRS. CLARK exits. PHYLLIS then removes a wallet from her bosom, looks hurriedly around the room for a hiding place, finally selecting a large chair in R.U. corner, she hides it under cushion. In the midst of this action, SLIM enters abruptly from hallway, takes in the situation; PHYLLIS turns, discovers him. PHYLLIS is staring fearfully at SLIM when ED KING and CUNNINGHAM enter. PHYLLIS sits in chair down R.*)

KING. Howdy, Miss Halliday! Sorry to disturb you—(*Down R.C.*)—won't keep you long. (*Turns to SULLIVAN*) Sullivan, shut those doors. (*Turns back to PHYLLIS.*) I just want to ask you a few questions about this fellow Adams.

PHYLLIS. (*Rises in chair R. nervously*) Yes.

KING. Now, don't be frightened, little girl. Just answer up and tell the truth and it'll make things a lot easier for all of us. (*PHYLLIS sits.*) Now, then, when Adams came home from the fight last night, did you see him with any money?

PHYLLIS. No.

KING. He owns a wallet, don't he?

PHYLLIS. No.

KING. Huh!

PHYLLIS. I don't think so—I don't know.

CUNNINGHAM. Now, don't lie—we're going to get the truth.

KING. Now, just wait a minute, Jim—— (*To PHYLLIS*) You never saw him with one?

PHYLLIS. (*After slight pause*) No.

KING. You're sure about that?

PHYLLIS. Yes.

KING. Then Adams didn't give you any money to keep for him last night?

PHYLLIS. No.

CUNNINGHAM. Why, he saw——

KING. I'll handle this, Jim. (*Turning to SULLIVAN*) Sullivan, you said at the hearing today that when you got back at the hotel last night, Miss Halliday took Adams upstairs.

SLIM. That's right.

KING. (*Turns to PHYLLIS*) Just why did you do that?

PHYLLIS. John was hurt. He was in a dazed condition. I wanted him to lie down.

CUNNINGHAM. You mean you wanted to hide my wallet.

KING. (*Starts to stop CUNNINGHAM when the idea hits him. He turns again to PHYLLIS*) You take care of some of the rooms here, don't you?

PHYLLIS. Yes.

KING. Adams' room?

PHYLLIS. Yes.

KING. Ah, ha! I guess that'll be about all for now. Thank you, Miss Halliday. (*Starts up for c. door.*)

SLIM. (*Crossing up*) Hey, Sheriff! I want to see you a minute. (*He looks menacingly at PHYLLIS.*)

SHERIFF. All right, come along.

(*They both exit c. to L., closing doors behind them.*)

PHYLLIS *starts quickly up after them. CUNNINGHAM intercepts her.*)

CUNNINGHAM. Young lady, you know a lot more about this than you've admitted. Don't you realize that in trying to shield Adams you're laying yourself liable?

PHYLLIS. (*At bay*) I told all I knew.

CUNNINGHAM. Oh, no, you didn't. You'd like to keep him out of prison. Wouldn't you?

PHYLLIS. They can't send him to *prison*!

CUNNINGHAM. We'll see about that. We've got enough evidence right now to send him up for ten years.

PHYLLIS. (*Desperately*) I don't believe you. (*Turning away down R.*)

CUNNINGHAM. (*Crosses to PHYLLIS*) I'm going to prove that Adams stole my wallet—(THE DEACON *enters C. from L.*)—and that he gave it to you to keep for him; then I'm going to—— (THE DEACON *clears his throat to attract CUNNINGHAM'S attention, says: "Brother Cunningham"*) Oh, there you are! Have you prepared that statement?

DEACON. I regret to say, Brother Cunningham, that I haven't—I've been wondering how to word it.

CUNNINGHAM. I'll tell you how to word it. Just say: "I do hereby wholly and fully retract——" (SLIM *enters from hallway.*)

DEACON. Pardon me, Brother Cunningham—would you mind stepping into my room? It's a little more private there—— (*They cross to door L., the DEACON pulling CUNNINGHAM along.*) You can write it down, and I'll sign it, and then we can send it out for publication. (*He shoves CUNNINGHAM through door L. and follows.*)

SLIM. (*Closes door, comes dozen to PHYLLIS*) Listen, Girlie—— (*PHYLLIS rushes to meet him.*)

PHYLLIS. What did you tell the Sheriff?

SLIM. I tried to convince him he was making a mistake. But it looks pretty bad for you and Adams.

PHYLLIS. Oh!

SLIM. There, there, ain't I your friend? I'd go the limit for you any time, little girl.

PHYLLIS. You've been *wonderful*. (*Crosses away from him a step, downs into chair down R.*)

SLIM. Now, listen—I'm going to do all I can to save Adams, because I know it will make you happy—but there's no use in us kidding ourselves, Girlie—when we *both* know that Adams is a *crook*.

PHYLLIS. (*Apprehensively*) I—what do you know?

SLIM. I know he stole Cunningham's wallet and four hundred bucks.

PHYLLIS. (*Quickly*) How do you know that?

SLIM. Because I saw him do it. And I know you've got the wallet.

PHYLLIS. (*Rises*) Oh!

SLIM. (*Supporting her*) Now—now, don't worry—if I wasn't strong for you I'd have spilt it when they were giving you the third degree——

PHYLLIS. He—he didn't mean to steal the money—he only wanted to get what belonged to him—and he was doing it for me.

SLIM. (*Turning*) Yeh—I know all about that. now, listen—(*Over to her*)—we've got to work fast, or it's a cinch that Adams will go up for a long stretch.

PHYLLIS. But you said you'd get a good lawyer.

SLIM. Sure I will—but you got to get away from here quick.

PHYLLIS. Why?

SLIM. They know that you're lying to save Adams. The Sheriff has just gone to get a warrant for your arrest!

PHYLLIS. Let them arrest me. I'll never leave John.

SLIM. But they'll force you to take the stand and testify against Adams.

PHYLLIS. (*Hysterically*) They can't make me tell anything.

SLIM. Say—if they ever put you on that stand, Adams hasn't got a chance in the world. Why, those legal sharks will drag enough evidence out of you to send him up for life.

PHYLLIS. Oh, what can I do to help him?

SLIM. You've got to get away from here—and stay away until after the trial.

PHYLLIS. I can't leave John.

SLIM. If you stay, you'll be the one to convict him.

PHYLLIS. No! No!

SLIM. Don't you want to save him?

PHYLLIS. You know I do!

SLIM. Then you got to leave the state—*Chicago*. That's where my lawyer is. He's one of the shrewdest ducks in the game. Once he's on the job, Adams's as good as free. (*Crosses up to corner chair, gets wallet and comes down again.*) What have you been hanging on to this for—why didn't you get rid of it?

PHYLLIS. (*Rapidly*) I thought if I could get four hundred dollars and return it with the wallet, they might let John go.

SLIM. That ain't a bad idea—— (*Hands wallet to PHYLLIS.*) Here, you keep that—we'll turn it over to our lawyer. If he says the word, I'll dig up the money and send it back. (*Glances at wrist watch as he starts up.*) Now we've just got time to catch the next train East.

PHYLLIS. (*Going up*) I must get word to John.

SLIM. You can't risk it. The Sheriff will be here any minute. We'll get word to him later. (*He secures her hat from chair, gives it to her.*) Now, get

your things together quick, and meet me downstairs. Come down the back way—I'll have a taxi.

(While he is saying the above speech, he hurries PHYLLIS off C. and down hallway to the R. After they are out of sight, there is a pause of a few seconds and WILLIE appears in doorway carrying a small tray with six cigars and a box of matches. He looks off down the hallway where PHYLLIS and SLIM have gone, then hurriedly crosses to the DEACON'S door and knocks.)

WILLIE. Deacon!

DEACON. *(Appears in doorway)* Ah, yes, Willie.

WILLIE. Here's your cigars, Deacon.

DEACON. *(Taking tray and turning as if to exit)* Thank you, my boy.

WILLIE. Sixty-five cents. *(MRS. CLARK enters hurriedly C. from L.)*

DEACON. Have them charged.

MRS. CLARK. *(Crosses down L.C. as WILLIE exits C. to R.)* Oh, Deacon, I've done it—I did what you asked me to. The arrangements have all been made, and Mr. Adams is probably released by now.

DEACON. Sister Clark, it was very fine of you to go Adams' bail, and it was mighty decent of Sheriff King to accept your word for your bond, and release Adams tonight.

MRS. CLARK. The credit is really yours, Deacon; your methods are so persuasive.

DEACON. If there is any credit it belongs to that little girl. She loves him, and, after all, love is the big thing.

MRS. CLARK. Oh, Deacon, you're so human.

JOHN. Mrs. Clark! *(Enters from hallway, crosses down R.C.)* Mrs. Clark! *(He seizes MRS. CLARK'S hands in both his own.)* I want to thank you. Mr.

King told me you put up your hotel as security for my bail.

MRS. CLARK. (*Who is between JOHN and DEACON*) We should really thank the Deacon. Have you seen Phyllis?

JOHN. No, I wanted to see you first.

MRS. CLARK. I'll find her and tell her you're here. (*She exits C. to R.*)

JOHN. (*Extending his hand to the DEACON*) So you helped to get me out. I want to thank you.

DEACON. (*Does not accept hand—drops his "DEACON" tones—sternly*) You're a very lucky young man, Adams. A follower of the crooked path doesn't always get the break you've just had.

JOHN. You've got me all wrong. You think I'm a crook—because you met me in that box car.

DEACON. Honest men seldom travel in such de luxe style.

JOHN. Now, get this straight, Deacon. I have been pretty worthless, I guess, but I'm not a crook.

DEACON. With the evidence against you, you'll have a hard time convincing twelve men that you're not.

JOHN. I swear I didn't steal Cunningham's money. Oh, I can see you don't believe me. But I didn't do it. They've made a mistake or else I've been framed.

DEACON. (*After a pause*) Adams—what were you doing in that box car?

JOHN. I was there because I was licked. When a fellow's been used to the best of everything and then is pushed out into the world broke—with only a kid glove training—well, when you saw me in that box car I'd got to the point where I didn't care—I was ready for anything—until I met Phyllis. When we jumped off that freight, on the long tramp back to this town, that little girl made me realize what

a quitter I'd been. I want to make good—for her—I've got to.

DEACON. Evidently your idea of making good for her was to turn prize-fighter and assault the promoter.

JOHN. He promised me two hundred dollars——

DEACON. Oh, I don't blame you for striking Cunningham——

JOHN. That two hundred dollars meant a whole lot to us—then he double-crossed me—and, well—I'm sorry I hit him, but I didn't take the wallet. (*Turns away R.*) I know they've got me in a tight corner, without friends or money—I guess I haven't got a chance—they'll probably send me up—and if they do—what's going to happen to Phyllis? (*Back to DEACON*) Deacon—you're the only one I could ask. If they do railroad me, promise me that you'll stand by her.

DEACON. My boy, you fail to realize that I'm not standing on the Rock of Gibraltar myself.

JOHN. (*After pause*) I know, Deacon—but——

(*MRS. CLARK enters abruptly from hallway R.*)

MRS. CLARK. Oh, Mr. Adams, Phyllis wasn't in her room—she's probably in the dining room helping Anna. I wish you'd run down and see if she's there.

JOHN. I will, Mrs. Clark. (*Crosses up a step towards door, then turn, then appealingly*) Deacon——

DEACON. (*As the DEACON*) I'll do all that I can.

JOHN. Thank you! (*Exits C. to L.*)

MRS. CLARK. I'd much rather he'd find her anyway.

BULL. (*Off R., obviously intoxicated, shouts and knocks on door offstage*) Sullivan! (*More pounding.* MRS. CLARK goes quickly up—looks off R.) Hey, Sullivan, open that door!

MRS. CLARK. That awful prize-fighter is intoxicated again.

DEACON. I daresay these local stimulants are rather potent.

CUNNINGHAM. (*Off L.*) Deacon!

DEACON. I'm forgetting Brother Cunningham. Will you pardon me? We're having a most important business conference. Splendid fellow, Brother Cunningham. Splendid fellow! (*Exits to his room L.*)

BULL. (*Off R.*) Hey, Sullivan, open this door. I want my money.

MRS. CLARK. (*Now in doorway, calls in the hall*) Mr. Moran, stop this disgraceful conduct immediately.

BULL. (*Off*) He's got my money, an' I want it. (*More pounding.*) Lemme in, lemme in! (*He pounds on door again.*)

MRS. CLARK. Stop that noise, or I'll call the police! (*She turns down L.*)

BULL. That's right, Sister, that's right! (*He staggers into room.*) Call a cop an' have him pinched! (*He appears in view, attired in a bathrobe of brilliant hue.*)

MRS. CLARK. I'll have you arrested, if you don't go to your room immediately.

BULL. But he's got my money an' I want it. (*Drunkenly tearful.*) Ain't there no justice in this world?

MRS. CLARK. (*Pleadingly*) Mr. Moran, will you please go to bed. You're disturbing my guests.

BULL. (*Roars*) I'm only disturbing Sullivan. He——

MRS. CLARK. Please.

CUNNINGHAM. (*Appears in doorway of DEACON's room, and carries his poker hand in his left hand*) Mrs. Clark, can't you put a stop to this confounded row?

BULL. (*Seeing the cards*) Cunningham, are you playing cards with the Deacon—My God! (*He doubles up in laughter, and finally falls on the chair down R. CUNNINGHAM exits.*)

MRS. CLARK. Mr. Moran, please—go to bed.

BULL. (*Convulsed*) He's playing cards with the Deacon!

MRS. CLARK. You can see Mr. Sullivan in the morning.

BULL. (*Rising*) You're quite right, Sister—you're quite right. You're a lady, and I'm a gentl'man—and a gentl'man always tries to please a lady—I'm a regular guy, I am—(*Thumps himself on chest, nearly knocking himself off balance*)—and I'm going ter go to bed, because I'm a gentl'man. (*He staggers a bit to R. as JOHN enters.*)

JOHN. Mrs. Clark, Phyllis wasn't downstairs.

BULL. Hello, Adams! When did yer get out? Hooray!

MRS. CLARK. Mr. Adams, will you please take this man to his room?

JOHN. Come on, old man, you'd better go to bed.

BULL. (*JOHN ad libs. with him, taking him up to doorway. BULL turns in doorway.*) Hold on, Adams! I—I just remember—if I don't get my money from Sullivan tonight, by morning the Deak's liable to have it!

JOHN. You'll get your money all right. (*Trying to lead him off.*)

BULL. (*Resisting*) All right, Adams. But he's got ter give me my money, un'erstand? 'Cause I'm a gentl'man, I am, and I make my money in a gentl'man-ly way—(*Bumps into edge of door*)—and there ain't no bum's goin' to double-cross me. (*He continues his ad lib. as JOHN leads him down hallway to R. WILLIE dashes in excitedly through c. from L. Crosses down R.C.*)

WILLIE. Gee, Ma, she's gone—and she went with him.

MRS. CLARK. What are you talking about?

WILLIE. (*Excitedly*) I saw him getting into a taxicab, and she had a suitcase and I yelled: "Where ya going, Mr. Sullivan," and he yelled back: "We're going to Chicago," and——

MRS. CLARK. Willie, what *are* you talking about?

JOHN. (*Enters c. from R.*) I got him to his room all right——

WILLIE. (*Quickly*) Oh, Mr. Adams, she's gone away with him in a taxicab.

JOHN. Who's gone away with who in a taxi?

WILLIE. Miss Halliday and Mr. Sullivan.

JOHN. You must be mistaken, Willie.

WILLIE. No, I ain't, either. I saw him gettin' in a taxicab and I yelled out, "Where ye goin', Mr. Sullivan?" An' he yelled back——

MRS. CLARK. Mr. Adams, what does it all mean?

JOHN. I don't know, but I'm going to find out. (*Exits c. to L., rushes out.*)

MRS. CLARK. (*Rushing after him*) Mr. Adams, Mr. Adams! (*WILLIE rushes off after his mother. CUNNINGHAM enters from L., followed by DEACON.*)

CUNNINGHAM. (*Crossing up to door, looks off*) Adams! (*Crosses down R.C.*) How did this fellow Adams get out of jail?

DEACON. I believe Sister Clark arranged for his release.

CUNNINGHAM. Mrs. Clark? (*Crosses down R.*) What right has she got taking sides with that thug?

DEACON. (*Note R. of table*) I don't presume to know her business.

CUNNINGHAM. (*Starts up*) Well, I intend to find out what she means by——

DEACON. Then I take it you wish to discontinue our little game for this evening?

CUNNINGHAM. What, with me way in the hole? I should say not. (*Crosses to door L.*)

(*WARN Curtain.*)

DEACON. But I believe you informed me when we played the last pot that you had no more funds on hand.

CUNNINGHAM. (*Starting in front of table towards c. door*) I'll get my check-book.

DEACON. Please do not misunderstand me, Brother Cunningham, but I'm just a trifle superstitious about checks.

CUNNINGHAM. Well, if you're so damn particular—I guess this note of Mrs. Clark's is good for its face value. (*Produces note.*)

DEACON. You hold Sister Clark's note for——

CUNNINGHAM. Twenty-five hundred dollars. Perfectly good collateral.

DEACON. (*Casualty*) Fair enough. (*Don't convey here that you are going to win the note.*)

CUNNINGHAM. Come on, now, you got to give me a chance to get even. (*Crosses to door L. as MRS. CLARK enters.*)

MRS. CLARK. Oh, Deacon——

CUNNINGHAM. So you've put up bail for this fellow Adams, eh? How did you do it? What did you offer as security?

MRS. CLARK. Why, this hotel——

CUNNINGHAM. (*Crossing to her*) What! Why, you had no right to do that. You put up this hotel as security for the money you owe me! (*Turns, facing front.*) Say, do you realize that I've practically gone bail for the man who assaulted me and stole my money? (*Turns toward DEACON*) Why, I'll be the laughing stock of this town.

DEACON. Dear me, so you will!

CUNNINGHAM. (*To MRS. CLARK*) Ten to one Adams will jump his bail, and they'll sell this property over your head!

MRS. CLARK. Oh! (*She sinks dejectedly into chair R.*)

CUNNINGHAM. Serve you right for being such a fool. You needn't expect me to sympathize with you—— (*Taking out note*) I'm going to put this note through tomorrow.

MRS. CLARK. (*Quickly*) But you can't do that. The note is for three months.

CUNNINGHAM. Oh, no, the ones you destroyed were for three months. This is a *demand* note.

MRS. CLARK. Oh!

DEACON. But, Brother Cunningham, you can't——

CUNNINGHAM. (*Starting L.*) You keep out of this, Deacon. (*Crosses L.*) I know my business.

MRS. CLARK. But surely you'll give me a little time.

CUNNINGHAM. (*Crossing to L.*) I'll put this note through the first thing in the morning! (*He exits L.*)

DEACON. Now, little lady, I wouldn't——

CUNNINGHAM. (*Off L. Calls angrily*) Deacon! when are we going to resume this game?

(DEACON turns his head slightly in direction of CUNNINGHAM'S voice—then turns his gaze back to the distressed widow and says suggestively:)

DEACON. Just have faith and patience. (*He beams encouragingly upon the distressed lady and starts promptly for door L.*)

CUNNINGHAM. Deacon!

DEACON. (*On the move*) Coming, Brother Cunningham! (*Rubbing his hands together gently, he exits L. to room.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE: *Same as Act I.*

TIME: *A few minutes later (the act is continuous from Act II).*

AT RISE: WILLIE is discovered asleep at desk. TONY appears in veranda doorway, sneaks across back of pillar towards stairway, sees dining room doors which are closed, looks around, then opens dining room doors quietly, looks in; starts towards WILLIE when MRS. CLARK'S voice is heard off stairway.

MRS. CLARK. Willie! (TONY immediately turns and exits into dining room, closing doors quietly after him. MRS. CLARK coming downstairs.) Willie, Willie—— (Goes to WILLIE and shakes him— from across counter.) Come, dear, you better go to bed now!

WILLIE. (*Waking up*) Aw, gee, Ma, she's gone. I wish I was dead.

MRS. CLARK. Willie, go to bed.

WILLIE. (*Reluctantly crossing to stairs*) Oh, all right—she's the best friend I ever had.

MRS. CLARK. Oh, Willie, has Mr. Adams come back?

WILLIE. No, there ain't nobody come back.

MRS. GREGORY. (*Off landing*) Come, Luella.

LUELLA. (*As they come down*) Mother, hasn't it been a perfectly thrilling evening? (*She lands down L.*)

MRS. GREGORY. I fail to see anything thrilling

about a servant running away with a vulgar man in a taxicab. (R.C.)

LUELLA. (*Crosses to MRS. GREGORY*) Isn't it strange that taxicabs are always associated with immorality? I had my suspicions from the first that Miss Halliday was a "mauvaise femme."

WILLIE. (*Coming down to MRS. CLARK'S L.*) She ain't any such thing.

MRS. CLARK. Willie Clark!—

WILLIE. I got to talk, Ma. A man can't stand by and hear a girl accused of being what she ain't. Even in French.

MRS. CLARK. Now, please obey mother, and go to bed.

WILLIE. (*Reclimbing stairs*) Gee, but she's a wonderful girl! She's the only girl I'd ever want to marry. (*Exits.*)

MRS. GREGORY. Brazen creatures like that always seem to hypnotize youth. (*Sits R. of table.*)

LUELLA. Maybe Mr. Adams will follow and kill them both.

MRS. GREGORY. How ever did they come to let that Adams out of jail?

LUELLA. Maybe he escaped.

MRS. CLARK. (*Weakly—R. of MRS. GREGORY*) I wish he had— Oh, what a fool I have been.

MRS. GREGORY. What do you mean?

MRS. CLARK. I mean the Deacon worked on my sympathy and persuaded me to go Adams' bail. And—well, I've jeopardized my hotel. (*Turns down R.*)

MRS. GREGORY. Oh, my dear, you have been foolish. But fancy the Deacon wanting to get that dangerous criminal out of jail.

LUELLA. I heard the Deacon say he hated jails, and thought they should all be done away with.

MRS. CLARK. He's as foolish and soft-hearted as I am. (*THE DEACON appears quietly on the landing.*)



"ALIAS THE DEACON"

DEACON. (*Gently*) Ah, sisters——

LUELLA. Oh, Deacon, we missed you so at supper—where were you?

DEACON. I've been having a very important business conference with Brother Cunningham.

MRS. GREGORY. I suppose you've heard that Mrs. Clark's waitress has just run away with a man——

DEACON. Sheriff King told me over the telephone. (*R. of MRS. GREGORY.*)

MRS. CLARK. Oh, Deacon, do you suppose Mr. Adams has left town?

DEACON. Let us trust that he won't prove so ungrateful.

MRS. CLARK. I'll never trust anybody again as long as I live.

DEACON. I am sure you don't mean that, Sister Clark, for even though the object of our charity should prove unworthy, the greater will be our *future* reward.

MRS. CLARK. I hope they'll offer a reward for Adams. I'll never forgive myself for being so foolish.

DEACON. Let your mind be at peace, Sister. If the young man fails to reappear for trial a month hence, *I* shall make good the amount of his bail.

MRS. CLARK. Why, Deacon——

MRS. GREGORY. (*Rises*) But, Deacon, can you afford to sustain such a heavy loss?

DEACON. (*Suavely*) Until Sister Clark is fully compensated, I shall remain in your *thriving* midst. (*MRS. GREGORY winces at the allusion and turns away L.*)

MRS. CLARK. What a splendid, generous man you are!

LUELLA. With such a gorgeous sense of humor! Oh, Deacon—do tell us another one of your stories; they are simply *priceless*.

MRS. GREGORY. Luella, don't be ridiculous—the

Deacon's stories are *anything* but priceless. (*Crossing up to door.*)

LUELLA. (*Crossing to the DEACON*) Your stories, Deacon, make the game so "*tres jolic*"—if you'll pardon my French. (*Pronounces it "tray jolly."*)

DEACON. I'll try to.

MRS. GREGORY. (*At veranda door*) Come, Luella——

LUELLA. (*As she crosses up*) Good night, Mrs. Clark. (*Turning in doorway*) Good night, Deacon.

DEACON. (*Crossing L.*) Good night, Sisters.

(MRS. GREGORY glares at him, and pushes LUELLA out. *Exeunt.*)

MRS. CLARK. Oh, Deacon, it is such a comfort to have you near me in this trying hour. I'm completely crushed to think that Phyllis should——

DEACON. Come, now, we mustn't judge her too hastily.

MRS. CLARK. I don't want to do that—but why has she run away with that man Sullivan?

DEACON. I don't know. But I am convinced that her motive was one of self-sacrifice—to help Adams.

MRS. CLARK. I could forgive her for making any sacrifice, Deacon, if Adams had been a man of your type; but good Christian men like yourself are very scarce.

DEACON. (*Humorously*) I daresay at times we are difficult to locate. (*He sits, down L.—takes up paper.*)

(BULL MORAN appears on the landing; he is attired in a bathrobe and is obviously intoxicated.)

BULL. Say, lady, where's Sullivan—I've just been up to his room and he ain't there. (*Clings to railing for support.*)

MRS. CLARK. Your friend has gone.

BULL. What! You mean he's gone for good? Didn't he leave no word for me—nor nothing?

MRS. CLARK. Not that I know of——

BULL. Oh, the dirty bum—leaving me flat this way—he's got all my money. Where did he go?

MRS. CLARK. I don't know.

DEACON. I believe his intention is to leave on the next train to Chicago with the young lady.

BULL. Oh, so that's his game, eh? Well, I'll get him—and when I do, believe me—— (*He staggers, falls up the stairs. Then exits off R.*)

MRS. CLARK. (*Excitedly, going to desk*) Oh, I just remember Mr. Sullivan hasn't paid his bill.

DEACON. I daresay it's not the first bill he's failed to pay.

ADAMS. (*Entering from veranda hurriedly and goes towards MRS. CLARK*) Oh, Mrs. Clark——

MRS. CLARK. Mr. Adams! I'm so glad to see you—do promise you won't run away before the trial.

JOHN. Don't worry, Mrs. Clark, I'll be here for the trial.

DEACON. Well, Adams—what's happened?

JOHN. Just as I nailed Sullivan at the station the Sheriff had to butt in. (*Voices heard off L.*)

DEACON. Here they are now.

(*DEACON crosses up L.C. KING enters from veranda, followed by PHYLLIS, SULLIVAN and the DEPUTY. All talking ad lib.*)

DEACON. (*Meeting KING up near door*) Well, Edward!

KING. I got 'em, Deacon!

(*PHYLLIS crosses to chair L. of table C., sits. MRS. CLARK goes over to her, sympathetically. DEACON remains at back U.L.*)

SLIM. (*Crossing down L., feigning indignation*) What's the big idea, yanking us off the train like we're a couple of criminals? You've got no right to hold us here.

KING. (*At L.C.*) We'll see about that, Sullivan. You and this young lady are important witnesses in Adams' case. And your trying to sneak out of town together looks mighty suspicious to me.

MRS. CLARK. Oh, Phyllis—why were you running away?

KING. I've got it figgered that Adams handed her the money he stole from Cunningham, to keep for him, and that she was aimin' to double-cross Adams and make a getaway with Sullivan.

PHYLLIS. (*Warily*) I've already told you that Mr. Adams didn't give me any money.

KING. It'll be easy enough to identify the money. Cunningham says there were three one hundred dollar bills and two fifties. Mary, I want you to search this young lady.

PHYLLIS. (*Rising*) Oh, no—please. I haven't any money—I swear it!

KING. Then you can't object to being searched.

MRS. CLARK. (*Kindly to PHYLLIS*) I'm sure you wish to be cleared of this charge, dear.

PHYLLIS. (*Falteringly*) Yes—I do.

KING. Then come along with us. We won't keep you five minutes. (*He takes PHYLLIS by the arm.*) We'll use the dining room, Mary. (*He starts her up.*)

PHYLLIS. (*Abruptly, drawing back*) No—I can't!

KING. (*Suspiciously*) Oh, I thought so. Now, look here, Miss Halliday, I know you've got the money on you.

JOHN. (*From down R.*) I know she hasn't.

KING. (*To JOHN*) How do you know she hasn't?

JOHN. Because I never gave her any money.

KING. We'll see. Come on. (*He again starts PHYLLIS for dining room doors.*)

PHYLLIS. No—No! (*She places her hands fearfully over her bosom.*)

KING. What are you trying to hide there?

PHYLLIS. (*Weakly*) Nothing.

KING. Oh, yes, you are. Come on, now, hand it over.

PHYLLIS. I've already told you—(*Reaching slowly in her bosom*)—I—haven't got—any money—(*She tremblingly produces the wallet, which KING immediately grabs.*)

JOHN. (*Crosses towards her*) Good God!

KING. (*Triumphantly*) This'll do. (*He inspects the wallet closely, reads*) "W. J. Cunningham." (*He opens the wallet.*) What have you done with the money?

PHYLLIS. There wasn't any money.

JOHN. (*Recovering from the shock he has had. To PHYLLIS*) Where did you get that wallet?

KING. None o' your tricks, young feller. I'll do the questioning here.

BULL. (*Now dressed, staggers onto landing*)
Wha's the row?

KING. (*To PHYLLIS*) Come clean, now. Adams gave you this—didn't he?

PHYLLIS. No.

KING. Then where'd you get it?

PHYLLIS. I—I found it.

KING. Where?

PHYLLIS. I—I won't tell. (*Turns upstage.*)

KING. (*To PHYLLIS*) All right, then you'll go to the lockup tonight and tell the judge in the morning.

JOHN. Sheriff—

KING. Adams, if you think anything of this little girl, you'd better persuade her to tell the truth.

JOHN. I'm just as anxious to find out where she got it as you are. (*Crosses to PHYLLIS.*) Go on—

tell him, Phyllis. Where did you find that wallet?

BULL. (*Staggers down steps to R.C.*) I'll tell you where she foun' it—she foun' it in Adams' room!

JOHN. (*Starts for BULL*) That's a damn lie!

BULL. (*Putting up guard*) No, it ain't. No, it ain't—she foun' it in your room all right—but the funny part of it is, you didn't know it was there yourself.

KING. Say, Moran, what are you talking about?

BULL. (*Indicates SLIM with a drunken gesture*) I guess Sullivan knows what I'm talking about all right, all right.

SLIM. He's crazy—he's drunk!

BULL. Ah, but I wasn't drunk when I saw ya sneakin' into Adams' room. I knew Adams was in jail, so I took a little look, an' I saw ya slip tha' wallet under Adams' pillow.

(JOHN springs suddenly at SLIM. KING intervenes.

MRS. CLARK screams. PHYLLIS rushes to her.

BULL staggers upstage so that PHYLLIS passes in front of him.)

JOHN. Why, damn you——

KING. (*Stopping him*) Now, you behave yourself.

BULL. (*Staggers to R. of table*) Tha's right—beat 'im up. I'll be right with ya. (*He collapses into chair R.C.*)

KING. (*To PHYLLIS, who is now down R. with MRS. CLARK*) Is that right, Miss Halliday? Did you find this wallet in Adams' room?

PHYLLIS. Yes.

SLIM. That drunken bum is trying to frame me because he's sore at me.

BULL. (*From his chair*) I'll learn ya t' run out on me. I hope they give you ninety years.

SLIM. (*Quickly, to KING*) Can't you see—he's trying to frame me?

DEACON. (*Coming down to L.C.*) I'm not so sure about that, brother. (*To KING*) Sheriff, what did you say were the denominations of the missing bills?

KING. Cunningham says there were three brand new one hundred dollar bills, and two fifties.

DEACON. Dear me. I'm afraid—(*Reaching in his pocket*)—I have them.

MRS. CLARK. Mercy on us!

(*THE DEACON produces a roll of bills from vest pocket and hands them to KING.*)

KING. Why, where did *you* get these?

DEACON. Brother Sullivan donated them to my missionary fund last night.

BULL. The ole poker houn' cleaned up on us.

KING. So *that* was the prayer-meeting I walked in on?

DEACON. I regret having deceived you, Sheriff, but when Brothers Sullivan and Moran begged me to participate in a friendly game, unfortunately I succumbed.

BULL. *Unfortunately* for us.

DEACON. Strangely enough, the gods of chance smiled upon me, enabling me to relieve Brother Sullivan of his ill-gotten gains.

SLIM. I suppose a guy couldn't have three hundred dollar bills and two fifties, unless he stole them off Cunningham, eh?

KING. The evidence of Moran alone is strong enough to convict you, Sullivan.

BULL. (*Drunkenly, elated*) Hooray!

KING. And the Deacon's story won't help you any.

DEACON. I'm afraid it will prove rather conclusive. Unfortunate—most unfortunate, for our err-

ing brother. Sheriff, I believe the minimum sentence for grand larceny in this state is ten years.

KING. That's right.

(DEACON *smiles at SLIM and crosses to U.L.*)

BULL. Ten years! (*Disappointed, jumps and starts for SULLIVAN.*) Is that all he's gonna get? (JOHN *draws him back to chair—he sits and gradually dozes off.*)

KING. Now, then, young lady, maybe you wouldn't mind telling us just why you were trying to make your getaway with Sullivan.

PHYLLIS. Why, I—he said if I stayed here, I'd have to testify against John. I'd found the wallet, and—— (*Turning to MRS. CLARK.*) Oh, Mrs. Clark! (*She breaks down on MRS. CLARK'S shoulder, who leads her towards stairs.*)

JOHN. Phyllis——

(MRS. CLARK *stops him by holding up her finger to her lips, asking him to be quiet. The SHERIFF watches them off, then turns and looks at SULLIVAN and speaks to his deputy.*)

KING. Bill—(DEPUTY *comes down between KING and SULLIVAN. Indicating SLIM*)—Take that bird away—enter him on grand larceny.

DEPUTY. (*Seizes SLIM roughly by arm*) This way out, Buddy.

SLIM. Ah, behave! (*Shakes off deputy's arm and crosses up, looks DEACON up and down.*) You're a hell of a deacon.

(*He exits through veranda doors, followed by DEPUTY. THE DEACON indulges in a series of pious smirks to allay suspicion and they both laugh together. MORAN emits a loud snore. KING crosses up—shakes BULL.*)

KING. Hey, Moran—Moran——

(MORAN *does not wake up, but snores again.* KING *looks knowingly from JOHN to DEACON, then goes to desk, and rings big tap bell. MORAN has business of jumping up quickly, shadow boxing, and then toward the DEACON. SHERIFF yells "Break" and MORAN finally staggers over to him, completely bewildered—at foot of stairs.*)

BULL. What's the trouble?

KING. You'd better go to bed.

BULL. All right—Hey! Wait a minute. (*He and KING start toward stairs.*) Hey, I just went to bed to please a lady.

KING. Well, now you're going to please me. See? (*He assists BULL up first step. BULL stumbles.*) Whoa, there! Steady! (*He pilots the groggy pugilist up the stairs. BULL ad lib. as they go: "I hope they give SULLIVAN ninety years." Exeunt.*)

DEACON. Well, Adams, the breaks seem to be coming your way, at last.

JOHN. (*Stands looking up stairs*) That little girl was going away—to save me. (*Down to DEACON*) Deacon, what a royal little pal she's been!

DEACON. You know, my boy, there's hardly enough real love in the world to go 'round—someone is always a bit shy—and when a young chap like you sits in the game and is lucky enough to draw the love of a girl like Phyllis—well, if you *are* crooked, you want to get straight—and if you're straight, you want to get straighter.

JOHN. I'll always be straight, Deacon, for her. The sheriff wouldn't let me talk to her at the station—I wonder if it's all right for me to go up to her now?

DEACON. I think it would be safe now.

JOHN. I got you. (*Exits up stairs.*)

(THE DEACON looks carefully around, then throws back coat as if to secure flask, but instead produces cigar. He then crosses to hotel desk and lights cigar at lighter. TONY cautiously opens dining room doors, comes down between c. table and chair which are R. of it, draws knife and starts toward DEACON. THE DEACON sees this in the mirror and at the same time JOHN appears at landing, takes in situation and yells, "Look out, Deacon!" TONY makes a plunge forward. DEACON steps aside by showcase and TONY plunges his knife in the top of the desk, at the same time JOHN springs down the stairs, grabs TONY by the wrist, turns him around and gives him a punch which knocks him to the floor, and puts the Italian out. Hold for a second before THE DEACON speaks.)

DEACON. Thank you, my boy, I won't forget that. (*Down to TONY*) Come on, let's get him out of sight.

JOHN. (*As he and DEACON are picking up TONY to carry him off*) Why, it's Tony!

DEACON. Yes, the Sheriff mustn't see him.

(*They carry him off through dining room doors, and MRS. CLARK enters on stairway in time to see this.*)

MRS. CLARK. Mercy on us! What's happened? (*Crosses to L.C.*)

DEACON. (*Coming back and getting knife, talking as he moves.*) Adams, you stay in there with him, take this, and whatever happens, keep him quiet. (*Hands JOHN knife and closes doors.*)

MRS. CLARK. (*Down L.C.*) What does this all mean?

DEACON. (*Coming down R.C.*) Mrs. Clark, what has just occurred here and what is likely to follow makes it necessary for me to do some explaining to you.

MRS. CLARK. Who is this Italian?

DEACON. He's a desperate criminal, an escaped murderer, in fact—(MRS. CLARK *emits a little scream*. DEACON *crosses to her*)—Now, please don't be alarmed. There's no danger to you. But, unless I can do some pretty fast thinking there's a large slice of trouble on hand for me.

MRS. CLARK. But I don't understand——

DEACON. You will soon. But before we go any further I want you to know how awfully sorry I am that my presence in your household has caused you so much trouble and alarm.

MRS. CLARK. Why, Deacon!

DEACON. (*Slowly*) Mrs. Clark—I'm not a Deacon. I'm an impostor—a professional card sharp.

MRS. CLARK. Why—I—I don't believe you.

DEACON. I daresay Sister Gregory and Brother Cunningham would.

MRS. CLARK. Why, it doesn't seem possible! You're telling me this because——

DEACON. I'm telling you this because you're a mighty fine little lady. You've been very, very kind, and made me ashamed of what I am. And unless Fate intervenes, I'm leaving town tonight, on the fastest train I can locate.

MRS. CLARK. *Why, Deacon?*

DEACON. This man's presence makes it necessary for me to be on the move, but I couldn't go without telling you the truth.

MRS. CLARK. (*Turns down L. In tones choked by emotion*) Oh—I'm sorry you've told me all this. I—I'm sorry you're going away. (*Eagerly, turning*

back to him) Oh, Deacon, why can't you settle down here and—reform? No one shall ever know from me what you've been. I'll do anything in the world I can to help you.

DEACON. I thank you. You're very kind, but I——

(ED KING *appears on landing.*)

KING. (*Laughing as he descends stairs*) This is the most excitement Herrington has had since I was elected Sheriff. (*He approaches the DEACON, cordially—down R.*) And I'm mighty much obliged to you, Deacon, for your valuable help. If you're ever in trouble, don't fail to call on your good friend, the Sheriff.

DEACON. Thank you, Edward. It will be a comforting thought to know I have a Sheriff for a friend. Well, Edward, I'm glad you're here. There is a little matter I'd like to discuss with you.

KING. What's on your mind, Deacon?

DEACON. First, I want to compliment you on the capable manner in which you have handled this case.

KING. I always try to give 'em my best.

DEACON. Undoubtedly, and it must be a great comfort to the citizens of this charming little town to realize that they have a man of your force and integrity to preserve law and order in their midst.

KING. Say, Deacon, what are you driving at?

DEACON. Edward, I don't suppose you would object if you were to wake up some morning to discover that you were a nationally celebrated minion of the law?

KING. Are you tryin' to kid me?

DEACON. Indeed, I'm not. But I think that I may be instrumental in affording you the opportunity to make an important arrest, in which there would be involved a substantial reward—to be exact, ten thousand dollars.

KING. Ten thousand! Do you mean that, Deacon?

DEACON. I do, Sheriff. Did you ever hear of Antonio Catena—the Italian desperado who escaped from the Colorado State Prison a short time ago?

KING. Did I? Why, the authorities everywhere have been warned to be on the lookout for him. I've got a police circular with his picture and description. (*Produces circular.*) Ten thousand dollars reward. Say, Deacon—— (*Holding circular for DEACON to see.*) Is this the bird you mean?

DEACON. He's the lad.

KING. (*Eagerly*) You know where he is?

DEACON. The exact spot.

KING. Where?

DEACON. I'll tell you——

KING. Eh?

DEACON. Provided we can come to terms.

KING. Oh—you mean the reward?

DEACON. I dislike being mercenary, but you've guessed correctly.

KING. That's easy, Deacon. Tell me where I can lay hands on this bird, and we'll split the reward.

DEACON. I should be reluctant to accept any part of the reward—for myself.

MRS. CLARK. Now, Deacon, don't be foolish. Five thousand dollars is a lot of money.

DEACON. Yes, Sister Clark, five thousand dollars is a lot of money, and it would mean a great deal to a young man who has narrowly escaped going to prison—and a young girl whose loyalty to him never wavered.

MRS. CLARK. (*Understandingly*) Oh, Deacon!

DEACON. It will kind of smooth the road they're going to take together.

KING. I got ya, Deacon. You want me to split the reward with them. (*Indicating up stairs.*)

DEACON. Exactly.

(KING stares admiringly at the DEACON for a moment, then seizes his hand and wrings it warmly.)

KING. Deacon, you're a regular sport, and you can trust me to see that the kids get theirs.

DEACON. Of course, I trust you, Edward.

KING. (*Crossing down R.*) But we're counting our chickens a little early. Where's the Dago?

DEACON. (*Crossing to dining room door*) At your service.

KING. What!

(DEACON opens doors, revealing TONY, who is sitting dazedly, chair L. of dining table, closely attended by JOHN.)

KING. Well, I'm damned! (*He goes quickly to TONY, assists JOHN in raising the Italian to his feet. KING then quickly handcuffs TONY and leads him down L. TONY, still dazed, curses feebly in Italian, glaring murderously at the DEACON. JOHN exits quickly up the stairs.*) Shut up! (*To THE DEACON, who is R.*) It's him, all right. How did you manage to cop this bird, Deacon?

DEACON. He came here for the express purpose of putting me out of the way.

KING. Why did he want to get you?

DEACON. I happened to be an interested spectator at his trial in Denver, when he was convicted for assaulting a little girl. (*ITALIAN goes for DEACON, swearing in Italian. KING yanks him back.*)

MRS. CLARK. The beast!

DEACON. A few days after his escape from prison, I ran across him in—(*Pause—then hastily*)—in this State. Before I could turn him over to the authorities he escaped, after swearing he'd get me.

KING. Lucky for us he tried to make good. He's

a valuable customer. I'd better put him in the safe. Come on, Walyo. (*He seizes TONY by arm and starts him L. when the DEPUTY enters with a telegram.*)

DEPUTY. Hey, Chief, this telegram just came to the jail for you—I thought I better run over with it——

KING. (*Takes telegram*) Thanks, Bill.

DEPUTY. I put Sullivan in No. 8.

KING. (*Turning over TONY to the DEPUTY and opening telegram*) Here's another one for you. Take no chances with this fellow. Put a special guard over him. (*Takes step downstage L.C. and inspects telegram.*)

DEPUTY. Leave it to me.

(*THE DEPUTY exits with TONY. KING slowly reads the message, then glances significantly at THE DEACON, without moving from his position.*)

DEACON. (*Quietly—after a pause*) Anything wrong, Edward?

KING. This wire—is from the Chief of Police of Salina, asking me—(*Reads*)—to try to locate and arrest a certain *card-sharp* reported to be operating in this vicinity. Description follows. (*He again looks at DEACON.*)

MRS. CLARK. (*Sits R. of table. Apprehensively*) Mercy on us!

DEACON. (*Quietly, after a pause*) Well, Edward, it looks like it might turn out even a bigger day for you than I prophesied.

KING. (*Quietly, but sternly*) Looks that way.

DEACON. Do you think it's likely you'll be able to lay hands on this *card-sharp*?

KING. (*Regards the DEACON closely*) Quite likely.

DEACON. Perhaps I can be of assistance to you.

KING. I might find it necessary to call on you.

DEACON. Uh huh.

KING. Uh huh.

DEACON. Well, Edward, I'm entirely at your disposal.

KING. Thanks. (*Going slowly to the DEACON and placing hand firmly on shoulder.*) I'm sorry, Deacon, but I'm Sheriff of this County—and I've got to do my duty. Got to get this murderer off to Denver—(*Puts telegram in pocket. Starts to door.*)—So I guess I'll have to postpone the card-sharp business till I get back. (*Quickly—from near veranda door—turns*) By the way, Deacon, will you be here when I return?

DEACON. (*Quickly*) Extremely unlikely.

KING. (*Quickly*) Well, good luck to you! (*He exits quickly and the DEACON takes out handkerchief and mops brow with a sigh of relief.*)

MRS. CLARK. (*Rises, crosses to C.L.*) Oh, Deacon. I do hope they *never* catch that card-sharp.

DEACON. Rest assured they never will—in Herrington.

MRS. CLARK. I can't believe you ever were a dishonest man. Why, you're giving these children their start in life. You're the most wonderful man I ever knew.

DEACON. (*Humorously*) Perhaps—when it's my deal.

(*WARN Whistle.*)

MRS. CLARK. To think—you're doing all this for a couple who are absolute strangers to you.

DEACON. No, we're not exactly strangers. Besides, I know the hurdles that are facing them—and I want those youngsters to take them clean—from the start.

MRS. CLARK. I think I know what you mean, Deacon. *You've* found the hurdles rather difficult.

DEACON. I couldn't make 'em at all without a deck

of cards, which reminds me—— (*He produces CUNNINGHAM'S notes, holds same for her to see.*) I believe that's your signature.

MRS. CLARK. Why, yes, that's my note to—— How did you get that?

DEACON. Brother Cunningham over-estimated his hand. (*He offers her the note, which she refuses, so he tears it up. JOHN and PHYLLIS appear on the landing, then come down to R. of DEACON.*) Well, youngsters—I see the little clouds that darkened your sky have all drifted away.

JOHN. You bet they have—we're going to be married as soon as Phyllis is——

PHYLLIS. (*Quickly, to warn JOHN*) He means—as soon as we can afford it.

MRS. CLARK. Oh, then it's all right—you can go right ahead? Phyllis can help me here in the office until you get that money, and then—— (*DEACON motions her to silence, then turns up R.*)

PHYLLIS. (*Crossing to MRS. CLARK*) Until we get what money?

MRS. CLARK. (*Glancing significantly at DEACON*) My dears, you musn't laugh at what I'm going to tell you, but I had a dream that you're going to get \$5,000.

(*WARN Curtain.*)

JOHN. Well, I won't laugh, Mrs. Clark, but I can't keep from smiling.

DEACON. Well, John, if Mrs. Clark's dream does materialize, bear in mind that most successful men make their wives custodians of the cash box.

JOHN. I get you.

(*WHISTLE.*)

DEACON. That's the proper spirit, my boy. (*The distant whistle of an approaching train is heard, two long and two short blasts. A pause, then DEACON starts to button coat.*) Well, friends, I'm afraid I must say farewell.

JOHN. (*Worried*) Deacon! Has anything happened?

DEACON. Not yet.

MRS. CLARK. Oh, Deacon, must you really go?

DEACON. Yes, while the Sheriff is still my friend. (*Takes JOHN's hand.*) My boy. (*Turns to PHYLLIS, takes her hand in both his own—tenderly.*) Well, my dear, may your garden grow nothing but roses.

PHYLLIS. (*Gratefully*) Thank you, Deacon. God bless you.

(*She impulsively kisses THE DEACON, who passes her over to JOHN. She goes into JOHN's arms. They turn up R. After DEACON passes PHYLLIS to JOHN he looks at MRS. CLARK, who is just above desk L. He is about to speak to her and then evidently considers it futile, picks up hat from C. table and starts out C. door, when MRS. CLARK stops him with her hand.*)

MRS. CLARK. Oh, Deacon, you will come back?

DEACON. (*After pause*) Yes, I will come back.

MRS. CLARK. (*Softly—taking his hand*) Deacon!

DEACON. And I'm going to take the hurdles clean.

(*The sound of an engine whistle, one long blast, sounds nearer at hand, and the DEACON hurriedly exits, as the curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN.

ELECTRICAL PROPERTY

PROLOGUE

1 Metal Box and hanging irons for fronts.

Front:

2—1000 watt lamps.

2—Effect disk.

1—Flicker effect.

Backstage:

1—1000 Watt lamp.

2—Effect Disk.

2 Practical lanterns.

1—6 light strip in car.

Dimmers for front and back stage effect in dimmer box.

ACT I

2 Sections of X-Ray Borders—8 outlets each.

9 baby spots with draw frames.

2 Two light brackets.

1 Single light bracket.

1—5 outlet strip with switch. Straw lamp.

1—Single light strip (dark amber).

2—100 watt bunch lights (dark blue).

1—Practical cigar lighter.

1—Telephone bell—push button off stage.

ACT II

2 Sections of X-Ray.

2 Baby Spots.

2 light brackets.

1 single—not lighted.

1 Parlor lamp and globe (practical).

1—5 outlet strip with three dark amber lamps.

1—1000 Watt bunch light—blue frames.

ACT III

Same as Act I.

P.S. All cables and plugs complete.

PROP. PLOT

PROLOGUE

1—2 quart pail (old) R. of c. door.

1—2 quart bottle of water in pail.

1—Surefire revolver down extreme L.

1—Tin can in Refrigerator (to put cigarette butts in).

PERSONAL PROPS.

For the Deacon:

1 box matches, 1 can Sterno, 6 nickels—1 dime.

1 Sterno stand, 1 cigarette, 1 small can coffee.

For "Brick":

3 nickels, 1 newspaper, 6 parlor matches.

1 package of 2 boiled eggs, 1 slice Swietzer cheese wrapped in newspaper.

For Tony:

1 knife and holster, 2 bananas, 1 old pipe and tobacco, 1 box matches, 6 nickels.

For Adams:

1 box matches, 1 cigarette, 1 ham sandwich wrapped in newspaper.

For Phyllis:

1 package wrapped in blue handkerchief contains

woman's underthings with chemise and stocking on top (cheap).

Off Left:

Train effect, train whistle on tank, train whistle (mouth), brake whistle, engine bell, escape steam effect.

ACT I

Hotel desk—down R.
Circular seat—around post C.
Round table—center.
Single chair—R. of round table.
Single chair—L. of round table.
Writing desk—L. against wall.
Arm chair—front of writing desk.
Arm chair—below desk.
Porch chair—on porch.
Square writing table—in dining room.
3 dining chairs—R. and L. and above table.
Key rack and mail boxes—above hotel desk.
Shelf—back of hotel desk.
Hotel hat rack (in dining room).
 (Shelf style) L. of center doors.
Room indicator with clock—back of counter.
Time tables and rack—between doors L.C.
Magazines and rack—below counter C.
3 pictures and 1 calendar.
On Hotel desk:
Hotel register.
Inkwell and ink.
Pen.
Telephone.
Small town phone book.
Book ("Foster on Bridge").
1 small vase flowers.
1 handbag (Mrs. Clark's).
1 check in bag.

1 box matches.

1 box matches (on shelf under desk).

1 small glass display case.

In drawer—Paper money and coins.

On Shelf back of hotel desk—

2 packs playing cards (1 red—1 blue).

1 real pack "Lucky Strikes."

In Mail Boxes—several letters.

On key rack—several keys.

On round table center—table cover, 4 magazines.

On writing desk—writing materials, 2 magazines, 2 small town newspapers.

On stairway—stair carpet.

On windows—Cretonne curtains, white sash curtains.

On stairway door—Cretonne curtains.

On dining table—white tablecloth.

Off Left:

ADAMS:

1 picture of bungalow.

1 furniture circular.

1 envelope with two \$10 bills.

WILLIE:

Baseball—bat—glove.

CUNNINGHAM:

Envelope with 4 promissory notes, 1 check.

DEACON:

1 Roll of green and yellow backs.

1 whiskey flask with cup top.

1 package life-savers.

BULL:

1 Boston bag—paper money.

MRS. GREGORY:

1 Hand bag and bridge score card.

SLIM:

1 roll paper money.

1 deck cards.

Off in dining room to L.:

PHYLLIS:

Tray of cakes and sandwiches.

Pkg. wrapped in napkin.

ACT II

1 settee—down R.

1 armchair—upper right corner.

1 bookcase and books—R.C.

4 single chairs (all different), front of sofa.

1 armchair—front of bookcase.

1 Elliptical table—L.C.

1 single chair L. of table—1 armchair—R. of table.

On Wall: 4 pictures and backing.

On Table:

Table runner, 3 magazines, 1 newspaper, Ladies' Home Journal.

2 small candelabra.

Off Center to Left:

1 bowl flowers—Mrs. Clark.

1 box candy (2 lb.)—Willie.

1 tray with 6 cigars and box of matches—Willie.

1 wallet (stamped "W. J. Cunningham"), Phyllis.

ACT III

Same as Act I.

Off in Dining Room:

Pair of handcuffs—Tony.

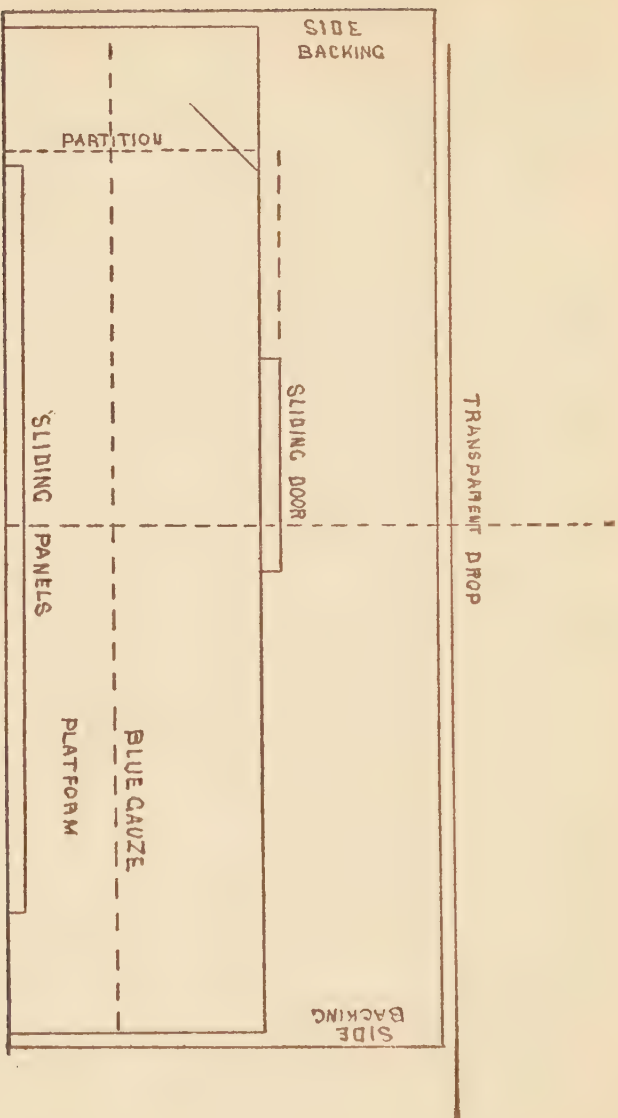
Knife—Tony.

Off Left:

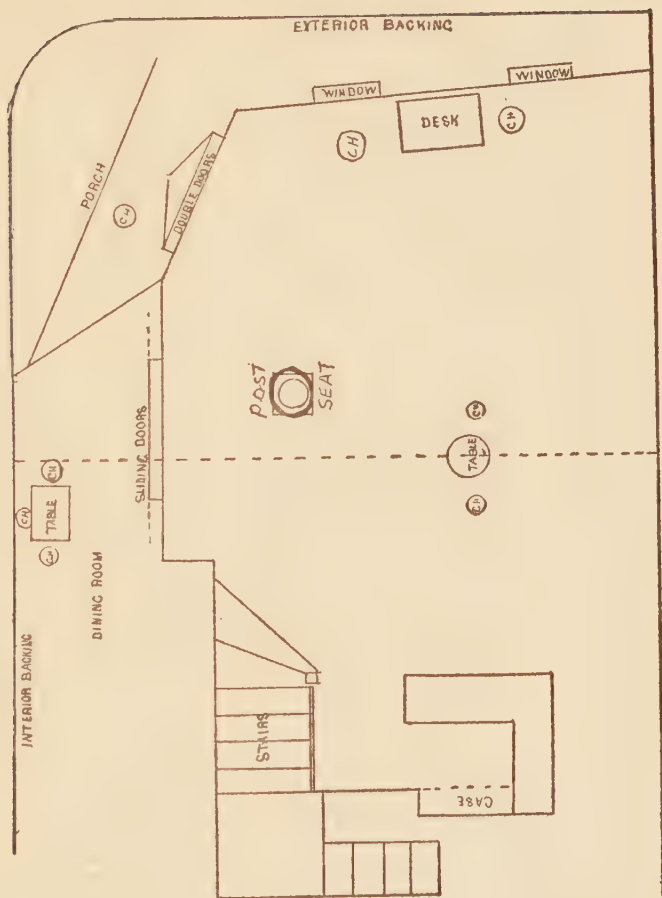
Sheriff.

2 Police circulars.

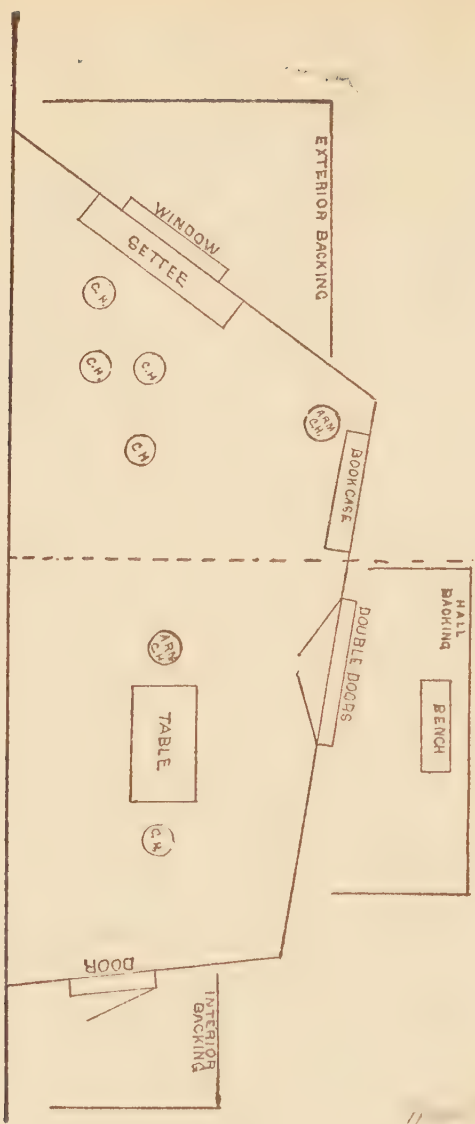
1 telegram—Deputy.



ALIAS THE DEACON
PROLOGUE



ALIAS THE DEACON
SCENE DESIGN ACT'S I AND III



EXTERIOR BACKING

WINDOW
SETTEE

BOOKCASE

HALL
BACKING

BENCH

DOUBLE DOORS

TABLE

INTERIOR
BACKING

DOOR

ALIAS THE DEACON
SCENE DESIGN ACT II

